CONSUMING GLOBAL LANGUAGE AND CULTURE:
SOUTH KOREAN YOUTH IN ENGLISH STUDY ABROAD

by

In Chull Jang

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

© Copyright by In Chull Jang (2017)
Consuming Global Language and Culture: South Korean Youth in English Study Abroad

Doctor of Philosophy, 2017
In Chull Jang
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
University of Toronto

Abstract

In globalizing South Korea, it is a prevalent belief that English competence and global awareness are key qualifications for successful employment. This belief has led South Korean young adults to pursue transnational experiences to improve their employability in the neoliberal job market. This thesis examines how the ideology of English as a global language produces the necessity of learning the language abroad and governs students’ overseas learning and life, through the case of Korean youth studying English in Toronto. Drawing on 13-month ethnographic fieldwork in Toronto, two research trips to South Korea, and various types of relevant documents, this thesis analyzes sociolinguistic trajectories of a group of Korean students attending a private language school. Especially, from a political economic perspective of language and culture, the thesis focuses on the ways in which the Korean students consume and negotiate desired types of English and English speakers.

This study shows that the majority of students accessing the English study abroad market were students from non-elite universities who had no legitimate global experiences and low levels of oral proficiency in English. Recognizing the necessity of linguistic and cultural capital, the Korean youth decided to study English abroad, as their parents agreed
to financially support their overseas education. In the private language teaching industry, such social, linguistic, and economic positions of the Korean youth led them to be strategic, calculative, and consumerist in terms of their English learning. In multilingual Toronto, the Korean students stratified English speakers according to the latter’s authenticity, proficiency, and intimacy. They constantly navigated “good” English programs and teachers in their language school. However, their status in the Western society, which remained as temporary visitors, non-native English speakers, and (East) Asians, posed challenges to immersing themselves in local cultures.

Furthermore, this thesis demonstrates that the Korean students’ attitudes toward life and learning emphasizing accountability and effectiveness caused emotional burn-out and intercultural fatigue. Subsequently, the Korean students temporarily suspended the normative ways for success in English study abroad and pursued an alternative way of life. They enjoyed leisure activities such as travels and everyday mingling, thus constructing their version of cosmopolitanism.
Acknowledgements

This research project has taught me that doing research is meeting, talking, and making relationships with people. Throughout my academic journey, a number of people warmly and sincerely invested their time and energy to share their ideas and encourage me. I believe that this dissertation builds on such “unconditioned gifts” from them. I do not think that it is an achievement made by my effort or intellect alone.

My foremost and sincere thanks go to my participants, especially the South Korean young adults who participated as key informants. I truly appreciate that by calling me hyeong and oppa, they opened parts of their life spheres to me, and tolerated my presence, my “weird” questions, and even my outdated sense of humor during my fieldwork. Because of their care, help, and hospitality, I enjoyed my fieldwork with much fun, as well as obtained valuable insight from them. I wish we will have another moment of eating samgyeopsal and drinking soju in the near future.

It is a great fortune to meet and have thought-provoking conversations with great teachers throughout my doctoral journey. First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Monica Heller, for her considerate and continuous support of my PhD study. If I have to choose a key moment in my doctoral life, I would say that it is a conversation that we had on Bloor Street after an end-of-course lunch in 2011. Her advice, “do whatever makes sense to you,” encouraged me to take a sociolinguistic and anthropological turn in my research. Her insightful research, passionate guidance, and empathetic support have all led to my academic and personal growth.

I am also deeply grateful to my committee members, Professor Jim Cummins and Professor Julie Kerekes. Undoubtedly, they offered valuable guidance, care, and feedback in every stage of my doctoral research. Professor Jim Cummins’ humanistic attitudes toward education and students significantly influenced me in making relationships with my research participants. Professor Julie Kerekes not only provided pinpointed comments on my research and widened my perspective through her course on intercultural communication, but also showed her understandings and support of my struggles as an international and “non-native” English speaking student and student parent.

I would like to thank my internal examiner, Professor Bonnie McElhinny. Since I met her in a CERLL Colloquium Seminar in my first year and worked with her as a graduate assistant, I have realized how multidisciplinary my areas of research could be and how wider and richer my research could be. I am also fortunate to have Professor Jeff Bale as my other internal examiner. I appreciate his constructive feedback on my theoretical frameworks.

My special thanks also goes to the external examiner, Professor Joseph Sung-Yul Park. Without his sociolinguistic research on ideologies of English in South Korea, my research would not have been incubated. Since our first meeting at the 2011 American Anthropological Association Meeting, thankfully, he has attended my presentations in multiple conferences, asked insightful questions, and listened to my research stories in
restaurants in Montreal, Hong Kong, Denver, and Portland. His interests and support proceeded with his careful reading of and valuable comments on my thesis.

My OISE colleagues were great teachers to me. They read drafts of my thesis, discussed my findings, gave insight, and humbly talked about shared PhD mentality. I would like to thank the South Korean doctoral “gang”—Eun Yong Kim, Choongil Yoon, Heejin Song, Hye Yoon Cho, Gina Park, Jinsuk Yang, and SoonYoung Jang. I am also thankful to all those who lived together with this gang peacefully and convivially—Marlon Valencia, Maggie Dunlop, and Kyoko Motobayashi. Especially, the “league” of student families in the Family Housing at Charles formed together with Heejin’s family and Kyoko’s family, was an unforgettable community of solidarity for studying, parenting, and living.

I am also indebted to scholars, colleagues, and friends outside OISE. I thank my MA supervisor, Professor Byungmin Lee, for his encouragement and support. Two OISE-alumni, Professor Tae-Young Kim and Professor Hyunjung Shin, continually helped me emotionally and academically. Trevor Crowe thoroughly edited and proofread the drafts of my thesis multiple times. John McGaughey was my “Canadian bro” who was always there to listen to my research, watch Blue Jays games, drink beer, and discuss raising kids. Sungjo Kim and Sunho Ko in the Department of East Asian Studies enriched my perspectives on Korean studies. Sungwoo Kim, Jun Seop Lee, Hae Eon Lee, and Jihwan Yoon supported me through friendship and concerns from South Korea. Because of my connection to them, I could continue to think about life and justice in South Korea. Especially, I remember the moment of social mourning that we shared during my fieldwork in South Korea in April 2014, when the Sewol Ferry disaster happened.

Lastly but not least, I would like to thank my family for their love, care, and support. My parents, Jepal Jang and Hangyeon Kim, always felt sorry that they could not support me as much as they wished, because they believed that they did not have enough linguistic, cultural, and economic capital. But they always believed in me—their belief was the most powerful tonic which invigorated me when I was exhausted. Because of my studies in Canada, my older sister, Yunmi Jang, took over the handling of our family matters back home in my place. I thank her, her husband, Mun-Soo Kim, and my nephew, Seongwoo, for their understandings and supports. I am also grateful to my parents-in-law, Chang-Young Jung and Yeon-Ok Kang, for their considerations and pray. Finally, I would like to express my love to my wife, Sowon, and two daughters, Se-Eun and Yeon-Seo. Sowon was always the first reader of my writings, even though they were not from her field of expertise, and patiently tolerated my roller-coaster moods like my two daughters. Se-Eun and Yeon-Seo all the times helped me to escape from the mode of PhD life that kept trying to persist even at home. Their lovely smiles, which for sure come from their mom, brought great happiness to me.
# Table of Contents

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................... ii  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .................................................................................... iv  
LIST OF TABLES ................................................................................................. ix  
LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................ x  
LIST OF APPENDICES ........................................................................................ xi  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION ................................................................. 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Research aims ................................................................. 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Situating the research ...................................................... 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Ŭhagyŏnsu: Defining post-secondary English study abroad .......... 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 South Korean youth in neoliberal times ........................................... 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 The politics of English in South Korea ........................................... 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Theoretical orientations: Political economy of language and culture ... 17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Production and consumption ................................................. 17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Investment, leisure, and consumption ........................................... 21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Methodological orientations: Critical sociolinguistic ethnography ....... 26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Sociolinguistic trajectory: Transition, tension, and suspension ....... 26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Ethnographic fieldwork ......................................................... 29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Sites ....................................................................................... 31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Informants ............................................................................... 34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 Data ...................................................................................... 38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 Positionality and reflexivity ................................................... 41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Overview of chapters ......................................................... 43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| CHAPTER 2 “INVEST IN ME”: ACCESSING ENGLISH STUDY ABROAD .... 47 |
| 1 Introduction ............................................................................... 47 |
| 2 Promoting the necessity of English study abroad ......................... 48 |
| 2.1 Marketing English study abroad ............................................. 48 |
| 2.2 Changing consumers in the market ......................................... 52 |
| 3 Recognizing necessity and accessing the market ........................... 55 |
| 3.1 Necessity of global experiences ............................................. 55 |
| 3.2 Necessity of English skills .................................................... 57 |
| 3.3 Access to the agency industry and the necessity of economic capital .... 60 |
| 4 Effects of parents’ economic capital on learners’ life and learning .... 64 |
| 4.1 Hard work and austerity in overseas study and life ..................... 64 |
| 4.2 Auditing in language teaching commodities ................................ 69 |
| 4.3 Setting aside cosmopolitan aspiration ....................................... 71 |
| 5 Conclusion ................................................................................ 74 |

| CHAPTER 3 “ENLIVENING” ENGLISH: VALUING ENGLISH ABROAD ...... 76 |
| 1 Introduction ............................................................................. 76 |
2 “Dead” and “living” English: Language ideologies at home and abroad ...................... 77
3 “Dead” English: English for standardized tests .......................................................... 81
4 “Living” English: English for oral communication ....................................................... 89
5 Embodying English: Making spatial distinctions .......................................................... 91
  5.1 South Korea as an illegitimate learning space ......................................................... 95
  5.2 Western English speaking countries as legitimate learning spaces ....................... 99
6 Insecurity of “living” English .................................................................................... 104
  6.1 Social values of “dead” English ........................................................................... 104
  6.2 In-between position in the South Korean English market ...................................... 108
7 Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 111

CHAPTER 4 STRATIFICATION OF ENGLISH SPEAKERS IN MULTILINGUAL
TORONTO: NAVIGATING ENGLISH LANGUAGE SPACES ........................................... 113
1 Introduction ........................................................................................................ 113
2 Setting boundaries among language communities: Native, non-native and Korean
English speakers .......................................................................................................... 115
3 Avoiding Koreans: National impostors and backlash ................................................. 121
  3.1 Institutional constraints on avoiding Koreans ......................................................... 121
  3.2 “Asshole” students: Affective responses and national labeling .............................. 124
  3.3. “Cheap girl”: Nationalism and gendered labeling .............................................. 127
4 Searching for authentic speakers: The paradox of invisibility and hypervisibility .... 130
  4.1 Exchange logic and decoupled authenticity for networking with “Canadians” .. 130
  4.2 Language exchange: Gendered access and the issue of Asian sexuality ............ 133
  4.3 Volunteer work: Labored access and language barrier ........................................ 136
5 Ordering non-native English speakers: Utilization of stereotypes and entangled criteria
........................................................................................................................................ 139
  5.1 Valuing non-native English speakers .................................................................. 139
  5.2 Linguistic stratification of classmates: Latin Americans, East Asians, and Middle
      Easterners .................................................................................................................. 1441
  5.3 Entangled linguistic order: Cultural stereotypes and linguistic deficit .................. 144
  5.4 Disentangling linguistic order: Pedagogical speakers .......................................... 148
6 Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 151

CHAPTER 5 CLASS “SHOPPING” IN LEARNER-CENTERED SCHOOL:
NAVIGATING LANGUAGE COMMODITIES IN THE ELT INDUSTRY ..................... 153
1 Introduction ................................................................................................................ 153
2 Targeting two language commodities in diverse programs: Human interaction and
English certificates ....................................................................................................... 154
  2.1 The first choice: Communicative English program .............................................. 154
  2.2 Dissatisfaction with low-intermediate communicative courses ............................ 157
  2.3 Need for class “shopping” ............................................................................... 161
3 Teacher “shopping” ................................................................................................ 164
  3.1 Institutional and cultural conditions for “shopping” .......................................... 164
  3.2 “Organized” teachers: Securing the desired quantity and quality of classroom
      interaction ............................................................................................................... 168
  3.3 “Active” teachers: Facilitating “backstage” interaction .................................... 171
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Limits to teacher “shopping”: Issues of “silence” and non-native classmates</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Certificate “shopping” ...................................................................</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Documenting language investment ...............................................</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Business English and internships: Added value and limits of certificates</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Intensive English certificate programs: Intensity as a reward .......</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Conclusion .....................................................................................</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 6 ESCAPING FROM LEARNING: ENJOYING COSMOPOLITAN TOURISM .......</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Introduction ..................................................................................</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 “Third-month slump”: Affective conditions of cultural consumption ....</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Frustration in English improvement .........................................</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Change in English learning attitudes: From obsession to relaxation</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Intercultural fatigue in inter-ethnic tourism ..................................</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Package tourism and artificial intermingling: Trip to Quebec ..........</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Independent travel and the burden of intercultural communication: Camping in Algonquin Park</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Break in comfort zone: Cosmopolitan experience in an intra-ethnic independent tour</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Korean-style travel to New York City: Budget and itinerary ..........</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Mediatized, (re)mediated, and embodied cosmopolitan experiences in NYC</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Conclusion .....................................................................................</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 7 EVERYDAY FUN IN MULTICULTURAL TORONTO: ENJOYING COSMOPOLITAN RELATIONSHIPS</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Introduction ..................................................................................</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Everyday fun in global friendship building ....................................</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Communicative events in lunchtime talks ....................................</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Heightening jocularity in lunchtime talks ...................................</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 K-pop, K-food, and K-f*words: Mobilizing Korean culture and language in cosmopolitan relationships</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Teaching Korean popular culture ...............................................</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Teaching Korean youth subculture: Drinking and swearing .............</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Ambivalence in cosmopolitan relationships .....................................</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 “Deep” talk: A national register ...............................................</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Cosmopolitan relationship-building as global “experience” ..........</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Conclusion .....................................................................................</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION .....................................................................</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 After going home ............................................................................</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Revisiting consumption of language and culture ................................</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Revisiting language education in late capitalism .........................</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES .....................................................................................</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1.1 Focal Informants’ Profiles</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5.1 List of Programs and Courses at Lingua City (abbreviated)</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5.2 Timetable of FCE Course</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 6.1 Itinerary of Jungmin’s Trip to NYC</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.1</td>
<td>Toronto Subway Map</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.1</td>
<td>Strategic Outline of TOEIC Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.2</td>
<td>Flow of Scripted Learning for TOEIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6.1</td>
<td>List of Matchip in NYC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6.2</td>
<td>Mediatization and Remediation of Dumbo, Brooklyn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# List of Appendices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1 Secondary Informants</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2 List of Classroom Observations</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 3 Lessons Summary</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 4 Transcription Conventions</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 5 List of Documents</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 6 Translation Samples</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 7 The Number of South Korean Study Abroad Students</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1 Research aims

This thesis examines linguistic, cultural, and educational practices and ideologies of South Korean youth who study English abroad in Toronto. The selection of this ethnic population is in part because of my background and scholarly interests, and in part because of the dominant presence of South Korean students in the English teaching industry in Toronto, in Canada, and perhaps the world. In the global discourse of English education, whether it is public or scholarly, South Korea is represented as (in)famous for the country’s and citizens’ obsession over English learning, which has been called *English fever* and *English frenzy* (J.-K. Park, 2009; J. S.-Y. Park, 2009a; Park & Lo, 2012). In the discourse, Koreans are described as those who passionately pursue, invest, and consume innovative English learning methods and opportunities, under the assumption that English serves as an important factor for social mobility and class reproduction in the country. As such obsessive educational investment in English has been a social phenomenon by itself or has caused other social issues, scholars from applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, and other fields of the social sciences began to critically examine the causes, processes, and consequences of English fever (e.g., Lo, Abelmann, Kwon, & Okazaki, 2015; Park & Lo, 2012). This research project is incubated by and grounded in the *critical* perspective on the issue of English in South Korea.

In South Korea, language study abroad is not a new practice for learning a foreign language and culture. For instance, when South Korea began to contact the modern and colonial U.S. in the late 19th century, the necessity of English learning was evoked, and a group of elite South Koreans left for the United States to learn its language and culture (Jang, 2012). A century later, in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, when the South Korean government promulgated globalization as a national agenda, a number of Koreans, including youth, were driven to go abroad and learn English (J. S.-Y. Park, 2009a). My research recognizes the *historical contingency* of language study abroad, thus

---

1 The market analysis by *Study Travel Magazine*, a periodical for language study abroad stakeholders such as language schools and agencies, shows that South Korea is the top country in the Canadian market in terms of the number of English study abroad students in recent three years.
situating the social and individual motivation of English study abroad in South Korea’s social and economic changes in the new millennium, which is characterized by the country’s transformation into a neoliberal and late capitalist society (Song, 2009, 2011).

I locate the necessity for Korean youth’s English study abroad as related to changes in their social and generational positions, caused by South Korea’s economic and labor reforms in the wake of the recovery from the economic crisis in the late 1990s. A number of studies and the mass media have shown that contemporary South Korean young adults are struggling with finding decent employment in Korea’s post-crisis society. As their life stage is in transition from learning to labor, the unprecedented high rate of youth unemployment and the increase in insecurity and precarity in their labor and life conditions have had profound impacts on their life projects and educational strategies (Abelmann, Park, & Kim, 2009; Arai, Ren, & Anagnost, 2013; H. Cho, 2015; Lukacs, 2015). With this in mind, I view South Korean post-secondary English study abroad as a life strategy that young adults take to deal with neoliberal social transformations.

The perspective of English study abroad as a life strategy, above all, raises the question of “why do Korean youth engage in English study abroad?” A simple answer may be “they study English to get a good job.” While this might be a valid answer, this thesis does not remain to reaffirm and reproduce the ideology of English as a tool for social mobility, often termed as linguistic instrumentalism (Kubota, 2011b; Wee, 2003). Rather, admitting that there is a necessity for the global language, which plays a key role in creating and maintaining the global market of English, in this thesis I will investigate the discursive effects of linguistic instrumentalism by asking and answering the following research questions: What kind of normativity in English and English learning does the ideology of English as a necessity establish and circulate? (Chapters 2 and 3), how do English learners interpret and negotiate this normativity? (Chapters 4 and 5), and what are some of the consequences of their interpretations and negotiations? (Chapters 6 and 7). In answering these questions, I will pay attention to the dynamics of (in)accessibility and (im)mobilization of a variety of resources that Korean English study abroad students imagine, possess, exchange, and acquire. Thus, what I mean by consuming language and culture is that language learners purchase or exchange the perceived legitimate types of global language and culture with their other economic, linguistic and cultural resources.
In this sense, this thesis explores the political economy of English study abroad where a range of linguistic, ethnic and cultural elements as well as economic resources are valued, distributed, and exchanged.

From the political economic perspective, my analysis starts from the fact that not all South Korean young adults can have this transnational education experience. As will be discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, Korean young adults have to deal with the struggle for access to the educational market from pre-departure. In fact, there is a certain population of Korean youth who are more likely to feel the necessity of English study abroad and to be allowed to have the access. As a result of the struggle for the access, a set of normative behaviors, ideas, and personalities for successful English study abroad is established. Following this, they can confront another moment of struggle in the course of English study abroad, as transnational experiences involve complicated negotiations of interpretations and representations of languages, nationalism, and ethnicity (Ong, 1999; Tsing, 2000). As a result, the established normative ways of English study abroad should be re-assessed or somewhat compromised, and a certain form of alternative moral should be enacted. Given such an analytical focus, the narrative of this ethnography will be concerned with English study abroad learners’ sociolinguistic trajectories of consuming the English language and cosmopolitan culture.

With a critical perspective on English study abroad in mind, I do not intend to show whether language study abroad is an effective program for language learning, what kinds of linguistic or cultural competence can be effectively improved through study abroad, or how language study abroad as a program should be designed and implemented (cf. Block, 2007; Byram & Feng, 2006; DuFon & Churchill, 2006; Kinginger, 2009). Rather, I intend to revisit assumptions that the field of language education currently shares as objectives and possibilities, such as communicative language teaching and student-centered teaching, and explore how they have been reshaped in late capitalist society. English study abroad represents a private educational sector, in which language is commodified, language learners are positioned as consumers, and language educators are expected to adhere to a certain form of consumerism. It has also been noted that the English teaching industry is becoming a site for the production of language and culture as a commodity (Block, 2010; Gray, 2010; Shin, 2015b), and that the reforms of public
education are more market-oriented (Collins, 2001; Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005; Urciuoli, 2003, 2010). To this end, my study aims to offer implications for the (im)possibility of language education that has also been recaptured into the late capitalist regime (Heller & Duchêne, 2012).

2 Situating the research

2.1 Ōhagyŏnsu: Defining post-secondary English study abroad

A number of South Korean undergraduates or recent college graduates leave their home for the purpose of language study abroad. This transnational practice is called ōhagyŏnsu (literally, language training) in South Korea. Although targeted languages vary, English is the most consumed language, and Western English speaking countries are the top destinations, because of English’s material and symbolic power in South Korean society. Students usually plan to stay overseas for approximately six to twelve months, and take this educational opportunity while being on leave from their home universities or right after their graduation from university. The suspension in their study in university programs and the motivation for international experiences bear similarity with the gap-year phenomena among young adults in many developed countries (Heath, 2007). Broadly speaking, South Korean English study abroad may be categorized as a transnational practice, which is governed by the logics of what Brown, Hesketh, and Wiliams (2003) call the economy of experience. Brown et al. (2003) point out that in a knowledge-driven economy, employability is determined not only by credentials and qualifications, but also by soft skills acquired through a variety of experiences.

Locating South Korean post-secondary English study abroad as a transnational practice by youth in developed, globalized, knowledge-driven, and late capitalist countries, I specifically define this study abroad as a short-term mobility practice taking the form of an educational investment in the private sector. This definition emphasizes three characteristics of this type of student mobility: investment, consumption, and the multiplicity of the markets. First, I approach English study abroad as a practice of educational investment for (upward) social mobility. Existing research on students’ transnational practices, especially early study abroad, has shown that educational
migration is a life strategy of (upper-) middle-class families who have an aspiration and capacity to secure their children’s social positions through educational investment into social, cultural, and linguistic capital (Heath, 2007; Lo et al., 2015). In a similar vein, Korean young adults from middle-class backgrounds are more likely to be motivated to take English study abroad, as they are convinced that this transnational practice will help them to learn a global language and culture. They further believe that the successful acquisition of cultural and linguistic capital brings rewards from their investment, in particular, successful employment in a competitive South Korean job market. However, as differing from student exchange programs that colleges implement as part of higher education’s response to globalization (Kinginger, 2009; Kubota, 2009; Lewin, 2009), this transnational education is fully financed by individuals. Depending on the location and length of study, they spend approximately $25,000-$40,000 CAD on overseas tuition and living costs.

In fact, the source of funding for studying abroad, which is almost a neglected issue in study abroad studies, has profound consequences for the ideologies and practices of border-crossing educational practice. Prospective South Korean English study abroad learners should rely on the educational services of the private sector to plan and take their overseas study (cf. Shin, 2015b). As English language learners enter the private educational market, they are voluntarily or involuntarily required to position themselves as consumers. This aspect is the second characteristic of South Korean post-secondary English study abroad—educational consumption. In their trajectories of English study abroad, South Koreans students are primarily involved with two separate private English study abroad industries selling various kinds of goods and services connected to language and culture: study abroad agencies and English Language Teaching (ELT) institutes. As with other mobilities such as tourism and immigration, English study abroad is similarly facilitated and mediated by agencies. The study abroad agency industry provides services related to the introduction and brokerage of educational commodities in host countries, including language institutes, programs, and home-stay families, as well as visa application services. When South Korean students begin to think about going abroad to learn English, they usually first search and visit agencies to obtain information on studying English abroad, and, once the decision is made, make a contract with an agent.
Because of their broker role, study abroad agencies play an important part in prospective students’ imaginations and aspirations for overseas education. Moreover, as a niche business in the transnational education industry, study abroad agencies employ multiple marketing strategies to promote their educational services and incite their clients’ desire (Chapter 2). For this reason, I will draw from data collected from this sector in analyzing the market discourse of English study abroad.

In host countries, on the other hand, students should register in private language schools or language centers affiliated to post-secondary educational institutes. The major difference from post-secondary degree programs is that there is no selection process in obtaining an admission from language teaching institutes. Simply, the payment of tuition is required. However, the saturation of the ELT market in Canada, or perhaps globally, brings about the stratification and specification of the market. As a result, students face the diverse types of geographical destinations, language schools and programs, and “good” choices of these educational options count to make success in their English study abroad. Students’ consumerism emerges in this context (Chapters 2 and 5).

Although the plan and implementation of English study abroad vary among individual students, the average period of stay in Western English-speaking countries is 6 to 12 months. Some Korean youth have recently begun to study English in the Philippines or India, but their stay remains there only for three months out of their college vacation time. However, Korean students planning to study in Western countries prefer to stay longer, in part because of their belief that the longer they stay, the better chance for language acquisition, and in part because of their cosmopolitan aspirations regarding Western cultures.

More importantly, the length of stay indicates learners’ involvement in multiple markets in this mobility practice. In Clarke's (2005) term, English study abroad is the transnational practice of “the middle,” similar to working holiday or overseas volunteer programs. The meaning of “the middle” refers to the fact that these mobility options are positioned in between immigration and tourism. On the one hand, transmigrants in this category do not plan to leave their home to live permanently in host countries, even though some of them change their initial plan and search for permanent residency. Moreover, most of them are not motivated to carry out their transnational projects for
economic or political reasons such as skilled worker and refugee status immigrations, which have become a dominate research area of transnationality and migration (Vertovec, 2009). On the other hand, similar to permanent immigrants, transmigrants in the middle also desire to be “immersed” (Doerr, 2013, 2015) in host societies, while working, volunteering, or studying. The ambivalent orientation to migration enables them to keep negotiating their transnational projects between “travelling in dwelling” and “dwelling in travelling” (Clifford, 1997). When it comes to the English study abroad context, language learners are willing to live their life like locals, but make sense of their transnational experience, based on their imaginations and dispositions not only nurtured and rooted in their home, but also presumed on their return to home. This multiple and ambiguous position of study abroad in migration studies calls on new perspectives on the analysis of the students’ lived experiences (Clarke, 2005; Yoon, 2014b).

The point that English study abroad is the transnational practice of the middle further raises a question as to the nature, terminology, and category of English study abroad. Considering that English study abroad is a kind of practice for linguistic and cultural capital and further for students’ upward mobility, it may be categorized as educational migration (Park & Bae, 2009), which is representative of the recent social and educational phenomenon called early study abroad, or pre-college study abroad (Lo et al., 2015). On the other side, English study abroad has begun to be understood as part of tourism, specifically language tourism, (Heller, Jaworski, & Thurlow, 2014) in sociolinguistic research. This terminology highlights that English study abroad is not only a kind of educational consumption, but also a type of cultural consumption that takes place in the market where the authenticity of targeted language and culture is commodified. The term, language tourism, illuminates that English study abroad works on both discourses of training and tourism (Yarymowich, 2004). Thus, rather than uncritically juxtaposing the seemingly conflicting discourses, what counts on the understandings of the in-between type of student mobility practice is how the two discourses are deployed, employed, and articulated within social actors’ experiences and accounts. With this in mind, this research will also examine how Korean youth’s educational struggle with English capital is connected to the tourism aspect of English study abroad grounded in Korean youth’s global aspirations and cosmopolitan lifestyle.
2.2 South Korean youth in neoliberal times

The spread and popularity of the global mobility of students are often viewed as an effect of the globalization of higher education (Lewin, 2009). The impact of globalization on higher education and global student mobilities is closely linked to its transformations of nation-states’ economic conditions and the effects on youth lives. I recognize the argument that young people are more likely to be placed in vulnerable conditions in the wake of social and economic crisis (Bourdieu, 1993; Choi, 2005; Song, 2007). As Lukacs (2015) points out, “the neoliberal state incorporates youth in its growth strategies because young people—especially the unmarried and the childless—ideally satisfy the demands for labor flexibility and mobility” (p. 387). In a similar vein, I view South Korean youth’s pursuit of transnational experiences as embedded in South Korea’s reform in the labor market and young job-seekers’ strategies for future employment (Chun & Han, 2015; Yoon, 2014b). Based on the review of existing literature on contemporary South Korean youth, in this introduction, I discuss their situations, life projects, and subjectivity formations within the context of three terms: job insecurity, skills development, and neoliberal affect.

First of all, job insecurity is a major social and economic situation that has been governing South Korean youth’s lives. The economic crisis in 1997, often called the IMF crisis, has been marked as a significant event in dismantling job security in South Korean society. South Korea’s government-led and development-driven economic regime confronted its capitalist limits during the Asian economic crisis in the late nineties. As a consequence, the country underwent a neoliberal restructuring of its economy, demanded by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as a primary condition of its bailout. For instance, the South Korean government eliminated legal and institutional regulations imposed on foreign capital and corporations, a change that accelerated the financialization of the South Korean economy (Song, 2009, 2011). Additionally, the government initiated labor policies, including the provision for workers’ layoff and the introduction of various forms of temporary employment. These actions increased the
flexibility and precarity of the labor market, giving rise to the perception among South Koreans that it is highly difficult to have life-long job security in a neoliberal workplace.

As a consequence, when today’s young adults are entering the South Korean labor market, they face the bifurcation of the labor market: low-paid, temporary, low-skilled positions and well-paid, high-skilled, networked positions. In between these two types of employment remain public employments such as public service workers and teachers in public education, which offer less salary but greater quality job security and pension plans. Most of the South Korean young job seekers struggle to find professional or public employment. However, the reality is the structure of the labor market in which a small number of talents are recruited and hired by prestigious corporations—what Brown, Lauder, and Ashton (2011) call global auction for talent—and the competition over the public employment is tremendously high. The majority of young job seekers fall into this precarious and flexible labor force.

South Korea’s neoliberal economy, in pursuit of labor flexibility, exploits the lives of Korean youths and their potential by positioning them as the most flexible reserve labor force (Lukacs, 2015). This exploitation is made possible because of youth’s life stage of the transition from learning to labor. In fact, stakeholders of employments such as corporations and governments control entry into the labor market through various technologies of recruitments (Jang, 2015). Even though the majority of youth are more likely to be trapped in a temporary and insecure type of employment, the social, cultural, and corporate emphasis on the importance of a well-paid, decent, and secure type of employment (not only for the national economy and corporations’ profits, but also for individual wellbeing) forces young job-seekers to constantly develop skills and qualifications for successful employments.

Hea-joang Cho (2015) points out that the projects of skills development and management are main features of contemporary South Korean youth. According to her, this generation is in contrast to the former generation, called “the New Generation,” who “valued freedom, self-expression, and self-realization” (p. 442) as the first liberal subject in modern South Korean history (cf. Choi, 2005). Based on the transformation in young adults’ life project and subjectivity, Cho proposes to call today’s South Korean youth “the Spec Generation,” a generation that, as her article’s title suggests, is “over-educated”
but “underemployed in contemporary South Korea.” She defines the social meaning of a term *spec* as such:

The term *spec* (an abbreviation of the word *specifications*—the detailed list of features describing the various components of a consumer product) pertains to resume-building activities and to the salient desire to attain long-term, secure employment. Upon entering a prestigious college with a lucrative major, students continue studying for the English proficiency test, aim for a high grade point average (GPA), prepare for various contests and qualification tests, and participate in study-abroad and internship programs (H. Cho, 2015, pp. 445-6, italics in origin).

In South Korea, “resume-building activities” are termed *spec ssak’i* (*spec* piling). I see the mechanism of the piling of skills, qualifications, and experiences, as what Brown (Brown et al., 2003; Brown et al., 2011) calls *positional competition* in the knowledge-driven economy. According to him, in the neoliberal and competitive job market, job applicants with better skills and qualifications are positioned in better and higher places than those without. Under the high rate of youth unemployment and fierce competition over better jobs, South Korean undergraduates cannot avoid embodying this mechanism of skills development. They admit the necessity of the constant engagement into the projects of developing and acquiring skills and qualifications that they believe today’s corporations require for their employees. Furthermore, the failure in the acquisition of a single item should mean that one would be positioned to be less competitive in the pool of competent job applicants. For this reason, job seekers cannot stop the excessive investment into skills development, even though corporations and the government stress that in the workplace, they do not need all skills and qualifications that young job seekers bring and present during the hiring process.

In fact, South Korean youth’s incessant investment into new skills reveals “the dead ending of the human capital regime” (Lukacs, 2015). As Michel Feher (2009) points out, the original version of the human capital theory is based on the economic calculation that additional education and training will lead to an increase in workers’ incomes. However, Feher argues that the recent version of human capital, embedded in the neoliberal transformation of society, highlights that additional investment into education and training will increase a job seeker’s possibility of being employed—that is, *employability*. This perspective suggests that learning a new skill and obtaining a new
qualification, as Feher (2009) and H. Cho (2015) argue, is speculative. The speculation of the educational investment implies that, as long as the educational investment is based on the expectation of rewards to be realized in the future, the rewards are not always guaranteed. What is worse, as Bauman (2005) argues, the successful acquisition of new skills and qualifications would turn out useless and meaningless in the latter stage of career development because the labor market situation is ever-changing. However, the speculation on rewards in education investments “govern[s] subjects seeking to increase the value of their human capital, or, more precisely, to act on the way they govern themselves, by inciting them to adopt conducts deemed valorizing and to follow models for self-valuation that modify their priorities and inflect their strategic choices” (Feher, 2009, p. 28). Thus, the neoliberal version of the human capital regime has powerful discursive effects on the formation of a self-developing subject (Seo, 2011) and conducts of becoming competent job seekers.

Finally, the increasing job insecurity and the following phenomenon of skills development culture in South Korea create a specific set of neoliberal affects which South Korean youth must manage in order to make a life for themselves in such a neoliberal society. Above all, South Koreans feel anxious over being left behind in the project of skills development. They worry about not getting a “good” job as a result of failing to successfully acquire a particular set of competencies and/or qualifications. The feeling of anxiety is strong enough a force to drive one to maintain constant skills developments (H. Cho, 2015). Another dominant affect that South Korean youth experience is indebtedness. Feher (2009) points out that “the exaltation of disinterested and benevolence” in neoliberal times is seen “not as a praise of generosity,” but “as the deployment of a mode of government whereby the recipients of solicitude are made to recognize their infinite indebtedness and dependence vis-à-vis their benefactors—and to behave accordingly” (p. 36). Taken in a South Korean context, Cho (2015) suggests that the youth’s indebtedness is predominantly oriented to their parents as parents tend to engage actively in their children’s education for success in their higher education and future career.

The imperative for skills development and its corresponding affects, such as anxiety and indebtedness, has been burning South Korean youth’s time and energies. As a
result, burn-out or helplessness are other affective by-products of their neoliberal lives in South Korea. In response, “positive” affects such as pleasure or happiness are considered necessary to sustain life despite uncertainty and impossibility of “good” life (Yang, 2014). Berlant (2011) points out that “optimism” is the strategy to deal with uncertainty and impossibility; especially, people keep optimism by temporally suspending normative belonging or attachment to objects and interrupting continuing life project. Importantly, Yoon’s (2014b) study on South Korean transnational youth shows that for them, leaving South Korea and pursuing a cosmopolitan lifestyle has been presented as a way of suspending their life project and imagining an alternative life, even though the escape from the country does not fully address structural insecurity and uncertainty of their future.

Living as young adults in neoliberal South Korea is, as Arai et al. (2013) argue, life-making in the sense that they should deal with political economic conditions of job insecurity, the social governing of neoliberal subjects and skills developments, and the corresponding affective effects. This research project will examine how Korean youth’s life-making distinctively unfolds in their educational and transnational practice of English study abroad. Specifically, through a sociolinguistic lens, it will pay close attention to the role of language in Korean young adults’ life-making.

2.3 The politics of English in South Korea

A number of sociolinguistic studies on English have shown that English serves as linguistic capital in social, political, and educational arenas in the new globalized economy (Park & Wee, 2012; Ricento, 2015; Wee, Goh, & Lim, 2013). I share a similar perspective regarding English, as English has been considered an important skill and qualification for employment in South Korea’s globalizing labor market. In fact, the economics of education and language, which aims to demonstrate the statistical correlation between language competence and other economic factors (e.g., earnings), has also shown that in South Korea, competence in English has statistically significant effects on employees’ salaries and workplace satisfactions (Kim, 2012). However, my interest concerning the power of English lies in the ideological construction of English rather than
the hard “fact” of the reality of the need for English, and further the ideological effects on the reality that one needs to learn English for their social mobility or well-being—namely, “the politics of English” (Wee et al., 2013).

The ideological construction of English as a global language is primarily based on the idea that English is necessary or required for national, regional, institutional, and individual developments and wellbeing. Wee (2008) calls this ideology linguistic instrumentalism—“a view of language that justifies its existence in a community through terms of its usefulness in achieving specific utilitarian goals such as access to economic development or social mobility” (p. 32). It is true that there is a real necessity for English; for example, multinational corporations need good English speakers for their business; job seekers should obtain a score of a standardized English test that the hiring company requires as a minimum qualification; and immigrants should submit a proof of English competence as a part of their citizenship or permanent residency applications. I admit that these necessities of English constitute the reality of having to learn English. However, one of the ideological effects of English as necessity is that it often hides the fact that the access to English, or the opportunity to learn English, is not always equally distributed to those in need. As critical sociolinguistic or educational research has argued, the markets of English and English education are stratified, and the access to the markets is determined by students’ socioeconomic or sociocultural backgrounds.

The formation of stratified language teaching markets is the most fundamental ideological condition for the production of the promise of English. As students and their parents alike believe that “better” English skills bring “better” rewards, both of them aspire to invest their material and symbolic resources into “better” English learning, even though success in social mobility is determined not by linguistic skills but by the package of the relevant skills, knowledge, qualifications, and social backgrounds. I argue that the constant reproduction and circulation of the necessity for English is based on the social imagination of wanting to learn “better” English. This ideology of English as necessity makes it highly difficult for schools, corporations, and governments to see potentials of English other than instrumentalist or utilitarian perspectives, and based on this promise of English, the English language teaching industry not only produces but also develops and specializes in a variety of English educational commodities and services. In these
institutional cycles, the social imagining of English as necessity does not perish but reproduces its ideological power.

The social imagination of English as linguistic capital is not new in modern South Korea. The history of English in Korea shows that old or new elites in the late 19th and the early 20th centuries recognized the importance of English in learning more about developed Western cultures and modernizing a society (Jang, 2012). The geopolitical relation between South Korea and the U.S. in the Cold War period also proliferated the power of English (Kim, 2011). However, one of the key characteristics of the formation and operation of the social imagination regarding the power of English in the new millennium relates to English education becoming the project of all citizens and not just a small number of elites. In this case, the *types* of used and learned English and the *methods* of English education come to have social meanings and functions as a symbol of prestige. The generation I examined in this thesis was the first to experience this process, as they went through a series of the main innovative reforms and changes in English education policies and practices. As a result, they have felt the importance and necessity of English more intensively and evidently than any generation that came before it.

The changes in South Korean English policies and educational strategies are closely related to globalization and transnationality that began to happen in South Korea in the early nineties. The changes may be summarized in four aspects. First, the secondary English education curriculum was revised in 1997, aiming to educate students to become leaders in the global and information society of the 21st century (Kwon & Kim, 2010). The English education curriculum highlighted, as its goal, the improvement of communicative and intercultural competence. Although this goal was also pursued in South Korea in its 6th national English curriculum (1992-1997), more concrete and practical actions were implemented in the 7th curriculum, including the placement of native English-speaking teachers in the classroom and the expansion of Teaching-English-in-English (TEE) classes. Along with the revision of the curriculum, the Ministry of Education (MoE) introduced early English education at the primary school level (Jung & Norton, 2002). Although heated debates took place in a range of education sectors, the MoE drove through the policy, contending that English education needed to be reinforced to support governmental globalization efforts. Behind such educational policies was the
widespread belief among citizens, as well as governmental officers, that South Koreans’ low English proficiency had been a major barrier against the globalization of South Korea in the past (J. S.-Y. Park, 2009a).

Second, while such an emphasis on English education in public primary and secondary schools exposed students to a greater amount of English input than before, it caused a boom in the private English education industry. Parental expectations about English education grew exponentially, and the public sector could not satisfy the demand. As a result, parents turned their attention to the private language teaching market for their children’s English education. According to the national survey on private education, most of the contemporary South Korean young adults has experienced learning English in the private education sector.

Most remarkable among various forms of private English education is the popularity of early study abroad among (upper-)middle-class parents looking for a transnational space for their children’s education. This new educational strategy drew much attention in academic and public areas, as it not only caused social “issues” such as goose family (Shin, 2010), but also implied the intersectionality of gender and class desires and subjectivities of those who engaged in this project (e.g., students, mothers, and fathers). As this generation witnessed their peers leaving South Korea to learn English or seek foreign credentials, they came to know that going abroad was not a special experience as opposed to the way former generations viewed the experience.

Third, as this generation is now entering college, they have to contend with new policies for strengthening English education (Cho, 2012; Kang, 2012). In the name of the need for globalization and the enhancement of competitiveness in tertiary education, a number of universities have increased English-only instruction, expanded international exchange programs, and raised the English proficiency requirements for graduation. Piller and Cho (2013) further argue that the reinforcement of English education in universities is closely related to university ranking systems and research funding from the government or other institutions, which are governed by the audit ideology of the neoliberal educational reform.

---

2 Since 2006, the South Korean government has conducted an annual or biannual survey on the type and the cost of private education. The reports are released on the website of Statistics Korea (http://kostat.go.kr/survey/pedu/index.action).
Fourth, South Korean corporations have changed their English requirements in their recruitment and promotion processes (Jang, 2015; Park, 2011). While corporations have stressed the importance of English communicative competence since the early nineties, when internationalization became the key business strategy, the focus of recent changes in corporate English policies lies in the assessment methods of applicants’ or employees’ English competence. They have shifted from written standardized tests of English to oral or simulated forms of English tests, or have included English interviews or presentations, in which employees or applicants should demonstrate their oral skills in real-time, naturalistic, and interactive ways. Such corporations’ emphasis on oral skills in English has led universities to strengthen English education for their students, as universities are concerned about their graduates’ competitiveness in the job market. Because of this new factor, the importance of oral skills in English has become a strong motive for Korean youth to study English abroad.

Of utmost importance in this series of reforms in English policies was the result brought about by the governmental and institutional emphasis on English education. This focus has led not to the reinforcement of public education, but rather the expansion of private education, as seen in the case of early study abroad phenomenon mentioned earlier. The private sectors rapidly figured out parents’ and students’ desire for quality English education, and presented innovative teaching and learning methods and services. As a result, the South Korean English education industry has been differentiated, and the boundaries of market differentiation have been guided by the types of commodified English on offer. On the one hand, elements of communicative competence, oral interaction with human interlocutors, native speakers, experiential learning, and immersion model are taken as the high-profile, lucrative, and most desirable forms of English education. On the other hand, learning for standardized tests, intensive rote learning, non-native teachers, and tactics-based learning take the other part of the industry. In such a stratified industry of English education, it is not hard for South Korean young adults to imagine which type of English is more valued in South Korean society and in which sector of English education they desire to invest. Learning English in South Korea is not just an issue of acquiring a foreign language, but rather a social practice that operates in the mechanism of the political economy of language.
3 Theoretical orientations: Political economy of language and culture

3.1 Production and consumption

I theoretically ground this research in the political economic framework of language and culture. The starting point of an attempt to understand language issues from the political economic perspective is to see language not as an abstract system, but as a social resource that is produced, distributed, exchanged, and consumed in a social field. In this understanding, language use and learning are captured as a social practice of accessing, appropriating, and evaluating linguistic resources, and the language practices inevitably affect, or are affected by, other practices in sociocultural and economic sites.

The early works conducted by Irvine (1989) and Gal (1989) offered a solid foundation for researching language from the political economic perspective. Bourdieu’s works, especially *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991), were also critical in framing language issues as social and political agenda. Along with these scholars’ theoretical contributions, in this thesis, I draw more attention to the recent sociolinguistic research in the role and value of language in late capitalism (Duchêne & Heller, 2012; Duchêne, Moyer, & Roberts, 2013; McElhinny, 2007). I find that this sociolinguistic strand has offered meaningful descriptions and explanations on how language is perceived and practiced in institutions and everyday life at the moment of the transformation of political economic regimes.

In fact, the transformation into late capitalism and the recent economic and social program of neoliberalism have reconfigured conditions of economic, social, and everyday life in multiple ways. When it comes to language, Monica Heller argues that late capitalist societies have attempted to incorporate language into the mode of production as added values and to transform it into commodities in various markets—what she calls *commodification of language* (Heller, 2003, 2010). Heller (2010) elaborates on this notion in two senses: language “as the means through which work is accomplished (the work process) and as a product of labor (the work product)” (p. 104). According to her, the site of language teaching is involved “in the distribution of commodified linguistic resources” and “in attempts to control what counts as legitimate language and who count
as legitimate speakers of any given language” (p. 108). The research site of this thesis falls in this case, where various types of English are transformed into teachable and learnable commodities and learners strive to access and mobilize them. This thesis tries to examine the processes through the analysis of students’ practices and ideologies.

Furthermore, Heller and Duchêne (2012) highlights that the research of language in late capitalism, or the commodification of language and culture, should examine the complex processes of transforming language and culture into commodities or key resources for the production and distribution of other commodities, rather than simply accepting it as a sociolinguistic phenomenon. In this sense, the concept of the commodification of language is more closely linked to Bourdieu’s framework stressing the convertibility and transformations of different forms of capital, and the roles of cultural dispositions (i.e., habitus) in the processes. Drawing on Bourdieu, Heller (2011) clarifies how to approach language: 1) language as a meaning-making process, 2) language as a process of organizing unequal relations of production and consumption, 3) language as a means of boundary making and maintenance, 4) language as an ideological practice for inclusion and exclusion, 5) language as a process of stratification (pp.37-39).

Although the concept of commodification of language has served as analytic tools for the role of language in different social, economic and cultural sites, and for the understandings of our life in late capitalism, one tendency is that such studies are mostly concerned with the production side in the political economic mechanism, as seen in extensive studies on call centers. Although I agree that the production of a commodity may be a starting point for the “social life of things” (Appadurai, 1988) in a capitalist regime, a commodity realizes its value by operating in the mode of consumption in the market. More specifically, its value should be exchanged, approached and calibrated through consumption. This thesis focuses on the analysis of the consumption side of the language teaching industry.

To frame language education in general or English study abroad in particular as a practice of language consumption, it first needs defining what consumption is. However, despite the extensive use of the term and acknowledgment of the importance of consumption in social science, as Graeber (2011) argues, the definition of consumption is somewhat unclear, and the boundary of a consuming action is contextual. For this reason,
Graeber (2011) claims that the focus of research on consumption should be on the investigation of why certain practices and ideologies should be considered to be associated with consumption, rather than taking consumption simply as “an analytic term” from the political economic perspective. Similarly, Miller (2012) suggests that his research on material culture intends to show the process of becoming a consumer culture and the consequences. Thus, in taking up their proposals for consumption research, what matters to this study is to reveal why the site of language learning, especially, English study abroad, is a sphere of consumption of language and culture, and how language learners do practices of consumption within the field—that is, consumerism or consumer culture.

In general, I view language education as a sphere of consumption, as the circuit of the production and consumption of language as a commodity is made quite evidently in late capitalist society. Language schools and relevant educational institutions have played a major role in transforming linguistic and cultural entities and related language and cultural skills, as sellable goods and service. In other words, language curricula and teaching materials are transformed into tangible goods, whereas language teachers become service providers as language labor. Similar to other language labors (Urciuoli & LaDousa, 2013), they should mobilize their linguistic, cultural, and even emotional competencies and resources to posit themselves as legitimate workers. More importantly, language learners enter the language educational site to purchase the commodified forms of language and thus to posit themselves as consumers. When a variety of language learning commodities are offered, they should make a series of choices and evaluate each option’s effectiveness on their learning. In this process, the objects of consumerist evaluations are not only language commodities themselves, but also the providers of the commodities such as schools, teachers, and curriculum developers, and if any, language brokers.

Such understandings of the field of language education enable me to establish two conceptual components of language learning: language learning as exchange and as meaning-making. First, I view language learning as the practice of exchanging possessed resources for a target language. The resources that are subject to exchange are not only economic, but also, more broadly, cultural, social, and semiotic ones. When the exchange
involves economic resources (e.g., tuition) in the language teaching industry, it may be called a purchase. Second, when language learning is viewed as the exchange of resources, it invariably engages with the process of meaning-making of exchanged linguistic, social, and cultural resources. This is not only because the practice of exchange presupposes that exchanged goods or services have a value (Graeber, 2001), but also because “the way in which we relate to them [objects] is increasingly organized in terms of knowledge and imagination” (Lury, 2011, p. 29). Lury (2011) points out that consumer practices involve “the significance and character of the values, norms and meanings produced in such practices” (p. 11). This point suggests that value formation and evaluation cannot be understood merely by the economic mechanism of supply and demand. Rather, it should be understood within social relations (Douglas & Isherwood, 1996) or the mechanism of the interaction between habitus and field, in Bourdieu’s term.

Shankar (2006, 2008) argues that even though consumption engages with meanings and values, it is somewhat unclear how to analyze the meaning-making processes—processes about how to index, objectify, and circulate a commodity as socially significant. To address this issue, drawing on a semiotic and reflexive approach in linguistic anthropology (Silverstein, 1979, 2003), Shankar proposes to pay more attention to talks about consumption and consumed commodity—what she terms meta-consumption. Further, Shankar suggests that the analysis of meta-consumption should incorporate not only the event of purchasing it, but also the circulated events of talking about the purchase and use of the commodity. In analyzing the consumer culture of Korean students in English study abroad, I thus attend to their meta-consumptive talks, such as talking about English speakers, English language courses, and English teachers. Through their meta-consumptive talks, I examine how Korean learners assign social values to linguistic and cultural resources, make a range of choices based on the value formations, and finally justify consequences of their choices. Especially, as the meta-consumptive practice of language learning invariably involves talks about a target language and the speakers, it represents another type of metalinguistic practice by revealing indexicality between language, and social value and identity (Agha, 2007; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Silverstein, 2003). Thus, the framework of language learning as consumption should be closely related to language ideology (e.g., Blommaert, 2005,
2010; Duchêne et al., 2013; Kroskrity, 2000; Kroskrity, Schieffelin, & Woolard, 1998; J. S.-Y. Park, 2009a). Furthermore, language ideology should be understood as mediated by and embedded in material conditions of language practice (Gal, 1989; Heller, 2007a; McElhinny, 2007; Shankar & Cavanaugh, 2012).

3.2 Investment, leisure, and consumption

The conception that language learning is the site of consumption of language and culture might presuppose that language learners enter the language education market to acquire a socially or culturally legitimate language—that is, linguistic capital. For this assumption, language learning is often preferably termed as language investment. The term, investment, reminds us of economic actions to obtain something valuable or desirable. In the language disciplines, this term has been employed and applied widely but differently. The difference in the approaches, first of all, depends on whether economic principles are understood literally or metaphorically. For example, François Grin’s studies on English and multilingualism tend to focus on economic gains obtained by choosing, learning, and using a language (e.g., Grin, 2001; Grin, Sfreddo, & Vaillancourt, 2010; Grin & Vaillancourt, 1997). However, even if it statistically proves that learning a language is associated with acquiring material benefits such as employment or entry into higher education, the reduction of linguistic values to an economic one and the ideology of language as a countable entity are limitations in his studies.

For this reason, Bourdieu’s metaphorical model of using economic concepts in analyzing various language fields, practices, and habitus, has been influential in critical language education and sociolinguistics. Above all, researchers in the field of second language education may be familiar with Norton’s concept of investment. Drawing on Bourdieu’s notion of cultural capital, Norton (2000) conceptualizes investment as acquiring “a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will, in turn, increase the value of their cultural capital” (p. 10). Notably, Norton expands gains of language learning not only to the material but also symbolic ones. I recognize that her suggestion has contributed to reformulating second language education research into more social and
critical perspectives. However, her conception of investment and its applications to language learning issues also have limitations, especially insufficient attention to the political economy of language. I assume that her limitations come mostly from her theoretical selectivity. She draws on post-structural theories in an attempt to link Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital to identities, and as a result, tends to put emphasis on identity negotiations in language learning. As a consequence, she fails to ask what kinds of different resources other than multiple identities language learners invest into a dominant language (that is, English, in her research) and what kinds of rewards they want to acquire by investing these resources into the language. Instead of answering these questions, she moves to the examination of identity negotiations, so that it is unclear whether she and proponents of her concept view language learning as investment into languages or investment into identities. Although she shows that her participants’ social and gender identities facilitate or impede their successful investment into English, her theoretical push toward post-structural identities fails to frame her participants’ investment as the process of identifying, evaluating, employing and negotiating different kinds of material and symbolic resources across multiple social and discursive spaces and ultimately as the process of being “good” or “successful” immigrants.

Also, Norton’s investment does not fully address the issue of language ideology, although her recent model of investment attempts to incorporate the element (Darvin & Norton, 2015). In her research, she does not question the ideology of English, simply assuming that English is an important language for new immigrants to settle down in a new environment. However, Allan’s (2014) ethnographic research on new professional immigrants in Canada shows that it is not always the case that any kind of English is important to new immigrants; rather, what they want to learn is a type of language which they believe the labor market requires. Furthermore, their practice of investment into English is to recast themselves as “good” English speakers and “good” employees. Additionally, Allan reveals that the successful investment into communicative skills in English does not always result in successful settlement or employment, but rather contributes to producing the neoliberal subjectivity of the self-developing self and ultimately deferring the realization of rewards on language investment.
Allan’s findings are significant as her research provides me with a bridge between investment and consumption in language education. In late capitalist society, educational investment has often taken the form of educational consumption to improve trainees’ employability. As Brown (1995) points out:

There is nothing new about this focus on the ‘rounded’ person, but whereas a range of broader interests and hobbies which offered time-out from academic study was seen as a form of cultural consumption which was enjoyed for its own sake, it has increasingly become a form of investment as part of the construction of a ‘value added’ curriculum vitae. This involves an increasing ‘commodification’ of the socio-emotional embodiment of culture, incorporating drive, ambition, social confidence, tastes and interpersonal skills. (p. 42; italics in origin)

More generally, Bauman (2007) suggests that the key characteristics of the society of consumer are “the transformation of consumers in commodities” (p. 12), where “members of the society of consumers are themselves consumer commodities” (p. 57). He asserts:

‘To consume’ therefore means to invest in one’s own social membership, which in a society of consumer translates a ‘saleability’: obtaining qualities for which there is already a market demand, or recycling the qualities already possessed into commodities for which demand can go on to be created (...) consumption is an investment in everything that matters for individual ‘social value’ and self-esteem. (p. 56-7).

From the above perspectives on consumption in late modern society, I understand consumption in the ELT industry not only as the practice of purchasing and consuming language education commodities, but also as the practice of recasting consumers themselves as commodities in the job market. I find this notion of consumption as investment analytically compelling, as it assumes that two distinct markets work in the consumption practice: one for the exchange of value and the other for the realization of the exchanged value. To exemplify, adult learners buy forms of language as a product in language education markets in order to recast themselves as an ideal type of English speaker sought out by the job market. These two markets (i.e., the language teaching market and the job market) are physically separated, but symbolically and materially
linked, as students aspire to acquire a language skill that the labor market treats as valuable, and the language teaching industry commodifies language in a way that reflects the demand of the market in order to attract more clients. In late capitalist society, just as it is important that the language teaching industry should tailor language commodities to customers’ needs, so is it that adult learners as prospective job seekers should navigate learning spaces to accomplish their goals.

However, the separation of the markets for the exchange and realization of value causes an issue of convertibility for language learner-consumers. As Allan’s (2014) study shows, it is not guaranteed that the value of commodity that they consume in one market will be fully realized in the other market, not only because the mechanism of value formations in both market, as Bourdieu argues, are not identical, but also because the realization of the value that consumers acquire in one market are temporally postponed in the future (i.e., from the moment of learning to the moment of job seeking). Thus, the consumption of language as investment always takes risk of losing their values in the future—again, it is speculative (H. Cho, 2015; Feher, 2009).

In spite of the close link between consumption and investment in education in a knowledge-driven new economy, one conceptual tendency is that consumption is seen as a practice motivated differently from investment. For instance, Kubota (2011a) reports a case regarding the motivation of English learning in Japan—English learning as enjoyment and leisure. Opposing to the other circumstances in which the Japanese learn English for upward mobility—what she also terms linguistic instrumentalism (Kubota, 2011b) like Wee (2008), she points out that applied linguistics has undermined this aspect of English learning because of the prevalent concept of investment, stressing that “English competency could mediate a higher socioeconomic status” (p. 475). Like Takahashi (2013), I view the Japanese motivation of English learning as part of the political economy of language desire. However, Kubota’s use of the term, consumption, illustrates how consumption can be captured in the applied linguistics field—that is, consumption as leisure.

In fact, following Thorstein Veblen, the perspective on consumption as leisure has taken the majority of consumption studies, as they are concerned with tourism, sports, and shopping. Further, this strand of research highlights that consumption is an essential
practice for self-expression and self-identity in a consumer society (Lury, 2011). In this frame, going abroad may be seen as relating to leisure as it is often generated by the cultural desire for cosmopolitan lifestyle and consumption (Beck & Sznaider, 2006; Takahashi, 2013). Yarymowich (2004) and Kobayashi (2007) show that English study abroad learners also share this desire. In my research, I do not undermine the tourism and leisure aspect of English study abroad, but explore South Korean students’ cultural consumption in the forms of leisure activities such as tourism or everyday multiculturalism in Toronto (Chapters 6 and 7). However, my key question as to cultural consumption is concerned with how to locate the conjunction of the two motivations (investment and leisure) at learners’ trajectories of English learning, or in a boarder sense, their life making, rather than simply discover the cultural consumption in English study abroad and describe investment as one and consumption as the other.

To answer this question, I have drawn my attention to the concept of enjoyment as a neoliberal affect. Assuming that consumption for leisure derives from the desire to enjoy life, I refer to Song’s (2014) conception of enjoyment in a neoliberal society. Song suggests two ways of roles and enactments of enjoyment in post-crisis and neoliberal South Korea: self-caring and self-suspension. Building on a Foucauldian approach to self-care and self-pleasure, she views self-caring as “the matrix of the self-discovery process” for “the care, love, and cultivation of oneself” (p. 74). For her, self-caring is an important moral to sustain life in uncertain times saturated with flexibility in terms of housing and labor. More important is that enjoyment in uncertain life also entails a set of techniques and acquired knowledge; for example, techniques for time management or financial management.

On the other hand, drawing on Berlant (2007), Song regards self-suspension as the moment of “episodic intermission from personality”, of “small vacation of the will”, and of “transition from the sense of loss and obligation to enjoyment” (p. 81-82). Questioning the subject as sovereign with the consistent will and intention, Berlant (2007, 2011) proposes the concept of lateral agency— “a mode of coasting consciousness within the ordinary that helps people survive the stress on their sensorium that comes from the difficulty of reproducing contemporary life” (2011, p. 18). Her concepts, self-suspension, self-interruption, and lateral agency—all highlight that the act of enjoyment
is not a permanent transition but a liminal moment with ambiguity in hegemonic discourses.

These two conceptions of enjoyment are useful in understanding roles and characteristics of cultural consumption in neoliberal times. This act of enjoyment is a practice of self-caring in the sense that it gives them room for break and reinvigoration. Because of self-caring techniques, neoliberal subjects can continue to sustain their life in the social governing of self-development rather than being burnt out or fully retreating from the sphere of social relations. At the same time, activities such as travel or sports may be seen as the moment of self-suspension, a moment that they should not be strategically and morally committed to the dominant moral of their life. In other words, by pursuing enjoyment and fun, they make room to be momentarily free of the dominant imperative to work hard and develop skills. However, the concept of suspension does not neglect the fact that the need for self-development is not completely annulled or that uncertainty and insecurity in life are not socially resolved.

4 Methodological orientations: Critical sociolinguistic ethnography

4.1 Sociolinguistic trajectory: Transition, tension, and suspension

In formulating research questions, I approached South Korean English study abroad as social ideologies and practices causing social processes and consequences. Taking a critical and social stance in language learning, I intended to investigate the processes of accessing and mobilizing linguistic and cultural resources in various social spaces and the consequences for evaluating those resources and experiences. Thus, I took *critical sociolinguistic ethnography* (Heller, 2009, 2011, 2012) as a methodological framework to make sense of Korean youth’s experiences and ideas regarding English, transnational life, and job-seeking. This methodological framework requires sociolinguistic researchers to see language as social ideologies, practices, and processes (Heller, 2007a).

With this methodological framework in mind, I also referred to assumptions and methods of *multi-sited ethnography* (Falzon, 2009; Hannerz, 2003; Marcus, 1995). Above all, English study abroad is a transnational practice, so that my informants were
supposed to move physically and discursively not only between nation-states but also within local and community levels. As the social and cultural conditions have been transformed by effects of globalization and transnationalism, Marcus (1995) suggests that ethnography should take “unexpected trajectories in tracing a cultural formation across and within multiple sites of activity that destabilize the distinction” (p. 96). Taking mobilities, multiplicity and interconnectivity of social and cultural practices into account, Heller (2011, 2012) proposes three analytic concepts for (critical) sociolinguistic ethnography: resources, discursive spaces, and trajectories. Heller (2011) asserts that in doing ethnographic work, one needs to understand:

how the trajectories of resources and actors intersect (or not), in the spaces where the consequential work of combining meaning-making with resource distribution takes place, with further structuring consequences in terms of how constraints are reproduced or changed, and hence in terms of obstacles and opportunities social actors encounter. (p. 10; italics in origin)

Acknowledging the concepts and practices relating to multi-sited ethnography, my methodological focus is to capture the processes of Korean youth’s practices and ideologies that unfold over time and space. Specifically, rather than juxtaposing episodic events or themes of their transnational practices, I aim to examine Korean youth’s trajectories of accessing, valuing, and justifying their experiences of English and English learning in multiple physical and discursive sites.

In “following the people” (Marcus, 1995), one of my concerns is about how to understand and describe their trajectories. As Juffermans and Tavares (2014) point out, the notion of trajectory would imply the processes of practice and ideology in a linear fashion (i.e., from A to B). Namely, qualitative or ethnographic studies guided by this narrative frame are more likely to describe social actors’ trajectories as equivalent to the passage of protagonists, while muting their multiple voices and perspectives. To avert this limitation, I draw my attention to the recent anthropological and sociolinguistic studies which have cast doubt on the validity of such linear narrative structures. These studies acknowledge that the discursive spaces across one’s trajectory are multiple and that the processes of meaning making are of ambiguity, ambivalence, and bivalency (Heller, 1988; Woolard, 1998). As Bakhtin’s (2010) literary theories informed
sociolinguistic studies (Blommaert, 2005, 2010, 2015), I am particularly critical of monolithic and singular understandings of social actors’ experiences and ideas. Thus, this thesis should not be read as if students’ subjectivities, practices, and ideologies seamlessly shift from one to another in their educational and linguistic trajectories.

Therefore, what I am concerned with in the analysis and descriptions in this ethnography is the dynamics of emergence, configuration, and negotiation of tensions, or frictions (Tsing, 2000, 2005), which my participants confront in their trajectories of English study abroad. They encounter a set of multiple tensions, which are laid out along the discrepancy and incongruity between imaginations and realities, and between hegemonic and liminal/alternative discourses. While the ways of dealing with the tensions are another vantage point for analysis in this study, I do not see the strategies and negotiations of tensions as the processes of overcoming them permanently. Rather, I understand it in two ways: ambiguity and suspension. First, I understand that as communities of practice are multi-sited, distinct working discourses or points of references for actions are coexisting and conflicting. Because of ambiguity and ambivalence, what matters to social actors is to strategically dispose the conflicting discourses and accomplish their intended actions, depending on their understandings of the situation. For instance, Korean English study abroad students come to a destination with the idea that Korean subjectivity will be both a barrier and a facilitator to their transnational English learning. Thus, they should not so much stick to one side of their national subjectivity, as they figure out the situation in which one or both of the two approaches to Koreanness become more resourceful in their sociolinguistic trajectories. In this way, I intend to avoid framing the negotiation of their national subjectivity in a way that, as traditional international education studies have suggested, it is simply enhancement or setback, or a change from one to the other as an effect of study abroad programs.

Second, I view the manifestation of a single practice and ideology over another in a certain context, as the effect of the temporary interruption of the first or suspension of the latter. The implication of the concepts of self-interruption or self-suspension (Berlant, 2011) for the framing of sociolinguistic trajectories is that the manifestation of one discourse does not exclude the possibility that the other discourse is still working perhaps
in latent states. By extension, when one fails to achieve an initial goal of their action and decides to move to another strategy, the transition should not be interpreted as permanent and final. Rather, I see the original desire as still working, even though it is not employed in the context at play. For instance, when Korean students fail to make a native English-speaking friend as planned pre-departure, and move to be more interested in non-native English-speaking classmates as interlocutors, their transition from native to non-native speakers in their trajectories of making a social network in English study abroad should not be taken as the permanent abandonment of their desire for native speaking friends. More precisely, the desire for English native speakers is temporarily suspended in their friend-making practice as they confront social, linguistic, and cultural constraints in accessing them, on the one hand, and as they seek for more fun and enjoyable moments of social gathering and relationship, on the other (Chapters 4, 6, and 7).

4.2 Ethnographic fieldwork

Following the framework of critical sociolinguistic ethnography with a focus on Korean students’ sociolinguist trajectories, I began fieldwork in March 2013 right after my institution approved the ethical protocol. Like other ethnographic studies, even before the fieldwork, I had opportunities to observe and hear about lives and ideas of English study abroad students. Such opportunities happened not only because I lived in an area where English study abroad industries clustered in Toronto, but also because my wife’s younger brother and female cousin stayed in Toronto for their English study abroad in 2012 and 2013, respectively. They and their friends frequently visited my place and told me about their experiences, which helped me to obtain basic information about English study abroad in Toronto, formulate research questions, and design the research.

My fieldwork was conducted in Toronto during a 13-month period, even though I maintained contact with my informants afterward. Additionally, I visited South Korea twice for research purposes. The fieldwork may be divided into three phases: March-April 2013 (doing preliminary fieldwork, accessing sites and recruiting informants in Toronto), May 2013-March 2014 (active fieldwork with a group of focal informants in Toronto), April 2014 and May 2015 (research trips to South Korea). In March 2013,
while looking for a language school, I met and interviewed Korean students who were recruited through an online community of Korean temporary visitors (e.g., English study abroad students, working holiday workers), in order to understand general trajectories of their studying English abroad and investigate the routes and methods of their access to English study abroad programs. I also contacted study abroad agencies; however, I was able to have an interview only with one agent. Most of the agents that I contacted were highly concerned about opening up their business to me, thinking that it was a leak of their business strategies. In April 2013, one of my colleagues in OISE introduced to me the language school that she was working at—what I named Lingua City. I contacted the manager, and after talking with the dean, he permitted me to access Korean students and conduct fieldwork in the school. In contrast to Korean study abroad agencies, managers, directors, teachers and staff members all showed an interest in my study and, when asked, participated in interviews and classroom observations.

May 1, 2013, was the first day of my fieldwork at Lingua City. In the first two weeks, I looked around the campus, figured out the school’s timetable, and randomly talked with Korean students. Over a couple of months, I also attended extracurricular activities that the school ran after-class. The activities were designed to offer students experiences of local cultures through short tours and participation in local events in Toronto. As new students were more willing to participate in the activities, I assumed that I would be more likely to meet with them. However, the first meaningful connection to Korean students took place through my personal network, again. At a lunchtime in the first week, I went to meet the teacher who introduced Lingua City to me, and she introduced her Korean student, Insung, to me. After that meeting, I had lunch with him almost every day in the session, and naturally, came to meet his Korean and non-Korean friends during lunchtime. Finally, Insung decided to participate in my study. As Insung chose a different morning class in the next session, he joined another lunchtime peer group. Following him, I also joined the group for lunch and met Dongil there. Dongil also decided to participate in my study as a key informant. Over the next month, I followed Dongil for lunch and met Jungmin, who first showed his interests in my study. In fact,

---

3 All informant names are pseudonyms.
Insung, Dongil, and Jungmin knew each other, as they all started to study at Lingua City around February 2013, and took the same courses before.

With help from those three Korean students, I was able to engage successfully and expand a Korean student network at the school around July 2013. Korean students in the social network, which consisted of three females and thirteen males, participated in this research as focal informants. Since then, I not only met and talked with them casually at Lingua City, but I also actively followed them; I hung out with them and participated in different social events with them such as attending parties, local festivals, and trips. I also observed classes that they were taking, had taken or recommended. Such fully engaged fieldwork continued until the last informant, Heejun, returned to South Korea in March 2014.

I wrapped up the fieldwork in Toronto in March 2014 and went on a one-month research trip to South Korea in April 2014. In South Korea, I met the participants of my research, who had returned. I also independently attended English study abroad workshops and fairs, conducted fieldwork in informants’ universities and in areas where English language schools were densely clustered. In May 2015, I visited South Korea again for research purposes for two weeks. While in Toronto, I kept in touch with my informants, using Facebook or KakaoTalk (instant messaging application). They also sometimes contacted me to ask about my Toronto life.

4.3 Sites

Toronto, as a host city for English study abroad, has several significant geographical features. It is a multicultural and multilingual metropolis, has a large population of Korean immigrants and temporary residents (study abroad students, working holiday workers), and is close to the east coast of the United States, a center of American culture and politics. As will be discussed in Chapters 4, 6, and 7, these geographical characteristics shape Korean students’ strategies of meeting with native English speaking locals, patterns of travel outside of Toronto, and everyday encounters with local cultures.
In this section, I will explain two general elements that can help one to make sense of English study abroad students’ life in Toronto. First, the clusters of English study abroad industries and students’ life spheres are formed along Toronto’s public transportation system, called the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC, Figure 1.1). Most language schools are located near subway stations, especially in downtown Toronto, or near the intersection of Yonge and Eglinton, just north of the downtown area. Tourist sites and cultural facilities including the Eaten Centre (shopping mall) are also clustered along the TTC subways.

Figure 1.1 Toronto Subway Map (Source: Toronto Transit Commission)

Second, Toronto has two Korea Towns: one near Christie station and the other near Finch station. Korea Town in Christie is an old Korean community within Toronto that has a number of Korean restaurants and shops. However, it has ceased to be a neighborhood Korean immigrants choose to reside in, as they prefer to move and live in suburbs in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). In contrast, the majority of Koreans in Toronto live near North York, the northern section of Toronto. As a result, there is
another cluster of Korean businesses in areas ranging from Finch, south to Sheppard subway stations. As the Korea Town in North York was formed more recently than the one in Christie, restaurants, and shops are newer, more authentic, and diverse. However, these features bring about higher fees and prices and are therefore more expensive.

Lingua City, a school that my focal informants attended, was located in downtown Toronto. At the time of my research, the school was considered one of the larger-sized language institutes in Toronto in terms of the number of registering students and the variety of offered language programs and courses (See Chapter 5). It had two buildings, but at the peak time of summer vacation, it rented space from nearby buildings. When I asked staff about the student demography, all of the manager, teachers, and staff members told me that they did not have such information. However, they estimated that East Asians (Korean, the Japanese, the Taiwanese), Latin Americans (Brazilian, Mexican, Colombian, and Venezuelan), Europeans (German, Swiss, French) and Middle Easterners (Saudi Arabian) amounted to the majority of the student population. Of those groups, the Koreans, Japanese, Brazilians, and Saudi Arabians were the four largest nationalities. The staff’s estimates corresponded to the results of a market analysis done by Study Travel Magazine (http://www.studytravel.network/magazine/), as well as nation-wide and regional surveys done by Languages Canada (http://www.languagescanada.ca/en/), both of which are associated with the language industry.

When it came to the timetable at Lingua City, the first class started at 9:00 am and lunch was between 12:00 and 1:00 pm. The afternoon class continued from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm (but there was no afternoon class on Friday). While the morning class was one course with a break around 10:30 am, the afternoon class was two separate courses; one was for 90 minutes (1:00 - 2:30 pm) and the other for 75 minutes (2:45 - 4:00 pm). Thus, full-time students at Lingua City took three different courses per day. After the afternoon class, the school ran paid and unpaid extracurricular activities such as tours in Toronto where one or two teachers joined and led every activity.

In addition, Lingua City had an English-only policy, so that students should speak English not only in class but also at break or lunchtime. Teachers and student monitors who patrolled during non-class times had the authority to issue tickets to students who spoke languages other than English, and the school imposed the penalty of school
suspension on the students who frequently violated the policy. In principle, English was
the only official language at Lingua City.

Although Lingua City was the site at which I recruited and met informants, my
fieldwork sites were multiple as a result of following those who had participated as my
focal informants. As mentioned earlier, I attended their social events such as local
festivals, parties, picnics, sports activities, or simply hung out. I also traveled with them
to Niagara Falls, Algonquin Park, and New York City. I had coffee, lunch, dinner, and
drank beer or soju (a Korean spirit) near Lingua City, my place, or the two Korea Towns.
In this sense, my research is not a school ethnography, but an ethnography of Korean
youth studying English abroad, who regularly attended Lingua City.

4.4 Informants

Table 1.1 shows the profiles of focal informants within my informants, Insung,
Dongil, and Jungmin’s social network. This ethnography is predominantly based on their
experiences and accounts of English study abroad. Therefore, it is worth explaining some
background information on this group of Korean students. First, the time of arrival and
the initial level of English proficiency contributed to forming this social network. They
arrived in Toronto in early 2013, and most of them were evaluated as low-intermediate
English speakers by the school at the onset of their English study abroad. At the time they
started their English learning at Lingua City, their language proficiency was similar, so
that they met each other frequently in the classes during their early period of study, and
consequently got to know each other and in some cases built quite a close relationship.
Second, male students accounted for the majority of focal informants. There is no reliable
survey that Korean male students are more likely to study English abroad in general or in
Canada. I assume that one of the reasons for the greater number of Korean male students
in this research is my gender identity. I admit that as a Korean man, I had much easier
access to Korean male groups perhaps because they were less conscious of my presence
in their group. Further, one factor that perhaps led me to build a closer relationship with
Korean male students was that all of the male students in this social network, including
me, shared the experience of military service, which is mandatory for all Korean male
citizens. Young Korean male adults prefer to study English abroad after the completion of their military service, not only because the Korean government restricts the overseas stay of Korean male citizens who do not complete their military service, but also because the 1.5 years of service requires these men to be isolated from civilian life; a sort of suspension in their life, study, and career path. The experience of military service affects the construction of Korean male masculinity, in particular, the hierarchical social bond, based on seniority, which is called sŏnhubae munhwa (Nah & Kwon, 2010). What was interesting was that as I was the oldest in this group, I received the most respect and politeness from other Korean male students while participating in their social events.

Table 1.1

Focal Informants’ Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Year of birth</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Completed School year</th>
<th>Major</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insung</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Private in local</td>
<td>3 yr</td>
<td>Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dongil</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Private in Seoul</td>
<td>3 yr</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jungmin</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Private in Seoul</td>
<td>graduated</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minsik</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Private in Seoul</td>
<td>3 yr</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geonyoung</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Private in Seoul</td>
<td>3 yr</td>
<td>Sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junghyuk</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Public in local</td>
<td>2 yr</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyunbin</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Private in Seoul</td>
<td>1 yr</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donghyun</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Private in Seoul</td>
<td>3 yr</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seulki</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Private in local</td>
<td>graduated</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jiyoun</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Private in local</td>
<td>1 yr</td>
<td>Social science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dongseok</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Private in local</td>
<td>3 yr</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taehwan</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Private in local</td>
<td>1 yr</td>
<td>Social work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sangwoo</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Private in local</td>
<td>3 yr</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haejin</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Private in Seoul</td>
<td>1 yr</td>
<td>Sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changjung</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Private in local</td>
<td>graduated</td>
<td>Social science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heejun</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Public in Seoul</td>
<td>3 yr</td>
<td>Sports</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.1 The type and location of South Korean universities are basic factors for determining their prestige in the South Korean university ranking system. In general, public universities are ranked higher than private ones, but some of the private universities in Seoul are regarded as more prestigious than local public universities.
Third, another element affecting the culture of the hierarchical relationship among my male focal informants was their degree major—engineering. There is also no survey that students of engineering are more likely to study English abroad, but I found during my research that a number of Korean male students were majoring in engineering. I assumed that this was the case because of Korean male high school students’ preference toward engineering in their selection of college majors. These selections tend to be based on the gendered stereotype that girls are better at humanities while boys are better at science. Korean males’ preference toward the field of engineering and the greater number of male students within the field contribute to forming this engineering culture, which is also closely related to masculinity and militarism. Above all, during English study abroad in Canada, Korean students’ masculinity serves as one of the elements shaping their trajectories of English learning. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, the racial marginalization in Western gender power relations tended to restrict their access to the communities of locals and in turn made them rely on their co-ethnic peer groups.

Fourth, notable is the information regarding my participants’ academic status about their school tier, academic year, and again major. Except for Hyunbin, most of them were from non-elite universities. It means that they were in a less privileged position in the labor market, where school rankings serve as an important criterion for evaluating applicants’ competence and personalities (Abelmann et al., 2009). Also, most of my participants would be seniors upon their return to South Korea. It means that, upon their return, they would have to finish the last year of their programs while preparing to seek for a job. Thus, they felt the pressure of finding employment more than those in their early years of university. However, male students in junior years similarly felt the pressure of studying hard and preparing for employment, as they completed military service—a key ritual of moving from boyhood to adulthood for Korean male citizens. School major affected my informants’ perception on the necessity of English, as well. Those who were majoring in engineering, arts, and sports, tended to think that they did not need English competence as much as those in the humanities or social sciences. However, if they did have a “good” command of English, they believed that they would
be more competitive in the job market, assuming that most students in their majors were not as competent at English as they were.

Lastly, the intensity of friendship in the social network was not equal, as they had social networks with other Korean students who were not included in this group, and with non-Korean classmates and locals (e.g., homestay families and Canadian friends). In fact, how to make and maintain their social networks was an important issue in their English study abroad; some had stronger desire to meet with Canadians, but others were satisfied that they remained within the Korean social network. In this group, the relationship of the inner group consisting of Jungmin, Minsik, Junghyuk, Hyunbin, Donghyun, and Dongseok, had the most intimate social bond, as they played baseball together on a regular basis in Toronto. Minsik was in charge of his English study abroad agency baseball team, which had a match with a Korean immigrant baseball team every Saturday. Minsik invited his Korean male friends not only in the agency but also in his school, Lingua City, even though they were not clients of his English study abroad agency. I was also invited and participated in a couple of the matches. As the members of the baseball team met almost every week, played baseball together, and had late lunch and drinks together after the game, their relationship was intimate. At the same time, the group culture based on sporting activities among men was typical of militarism, seniority, and masculinity.

In building and maintaining relationships with focal informants, I was not exceptional in the difference in the degree of relational intimacy. As a sole fieldworker, I had physical limitations in meeting with various subgroups of informants and participating in different activities simultaneously. As the fieldwork unfolded, it turned out that I built more intimate relationships with five students: Insung, Dongil, Geonyoung, Minsik, and Jungmin. Although there were different reasons for the more intimate relationship with them, basically they were more willing to share their experiences and thoughts with me, so I could spend more time with them more naturally. They visited my home, went on trips with me, and lived with me for a couple of weeks in my place when my family was away. This intimacy is the reason that their experiences and voices will frequently appear in the following chapters.
Besides these Korean students in the key peer group, secondary informants participated in this research. Some of them engaged in this project because of their relationship with my focal informants. As I participated in focal informants’ social events and observed their performances in the events, their friends that were present during the events naturally became the objects of my observation. In most cases, I told them about the reason of my presence and obtained verbal consent from them. At the same time, I purposely recruited and interviewed some secondary informants to supplement the experiences and ideas of key informants. This type of secondary informants included Korean students who did not appear in the focal informants’ social network, non-Korean students, staff members and teachers at Lingua City, and study abroad agents. The brief descriptions on secondary informants included in this thesis can be seen in Appendix 1.

4.5 Data

The data that I collected during fieldwork consists of three types: Field notes, voice recordings, and documents. I wrote 280 entries of field notes during my fieldwork, referring to Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011) for the guidelines, techniques, and tips on writing them. Interviews with focal informants (31 hours) and secondary informants (12.5 hours), interactions in natural settings (9.5 hours), school orientation events (2.5 hours), and classroom activities (12 courses, 49 lessons, see Appendix 2) were voice-recoded. The brief descriptions of classroom activities in the courses that I observed and analyzed can be found in Appendix 3.

During fieldwork in Toronto, I conducted ethnographic and open-ended interviews with key informants. I asked them about what I found interesting from my observations—in Agar’s (1996) term, rich points—or I just presented broad topics (e.g., school, teacher, English course, etc.) and let them talk about the themes freely. As I recruited key participants in the course of their study abroad, all of the interviews with them were conducted in Toronto, more precisely in the later part of their English study abroad. Thus, their accounts of pre-departure or early-period moments should be understood as their reflections on them at the time of interviewing.
On the other hand, the interviews with secondary participants were carried out in more structured manners, as I intended to obtain more specific information on South Korean students and their English study abroad experiences. In the following chapters, when I use an excerpt from an interview with a secondary participant, I will specify who he/she was, why I approached him/her, and what I asked him/her.

Most of the interviews with Koreans were conducted in Korean, whereas the interviews with non-Koreans were undertaken in English. However, in some cases, I carried out interviews in English with Koreans at their request. All voice-recorded interviews were transcribed, and transcripts in Korean were translated into English by me.

In the field, it was not the case that I could use voice recordings for all interviews, interactions, and classroom activities as some of the informants did not permit it. In this case, I observed interactional events and documented them in field notes within a reasonably short time after the events ended. Additionally, in the beginning, I tried to voice record natural interactions, but found that it often changed the atmospheres of the interactions that were taking place and evoked a feeling of unnaturalness among co-present interlocutors. As the fieldwork continued, I preferred to write field notes on natural interactions in more detail rather than to turn on my voice recorder or iPhone recording function, having found that this practice ensured a better ecological validity of interactions. To distinguish transcriptions of recorded verbal interaction from field notes on non-recorded verbal interactions, I call the first “talk” and the latter “conversation” when I insert excerpts in the following chapters. I present simple-format transcripts of recorded natural interactions and classroom observations, using a convention found in Appendix 4.

When it comes to the type of documents, I collected and analyzed different kinds of documents online and on-site, including relevant newspapers, institutional documents (schools’ and agencies’ websites, flyers, brochures, and TOEIC Newsletter), and guidebooks. I paid particular interest to English study abroad guidebooks with the following genre characteristics. First, guidebooks often featured aspects of memoirs in which authors had experienced studying English abroad. I looked for this feature because this type of writing tended to have descriptions and tips based on their experiences that
were more concrete and detailed. Second, and most interestingly, almost all of the authors were working in the English study abroad agency industry during the time of writing. I looked for the aspects in these guidebooks that reflected the market discourse of the business; in other words, they had the features of marketing documents. Third, guidebooks included not only information on English study abroad in general (e.g., destinations, application procedures for travel documents, etc.), but also advice on how to live and study to “succeed” in English study abroad. Similar to the genre of self-help books, guidebooks represented normative ways of life and learning in contemporary South Korean English study abroad. The reference information regarding documents of which excerpts are included in this thesis can be found in Appendix 5. All of the document excerpts used in this thesis are originally written in Korean and translated into English by me.

The work of translating excerpts written in Korean (i.e. interviews, field notes, and documents) was not straightforward. First of all, linguistic differences between English and Korean presented challenges. As a situational language, Korean allows language users to omit words and phrases when they share the contextual information. I found that such omissions took place more frequently in ethnographic and open-ended interviews, as the communicative situations were more casual. In the process of translating excerpts, I tried to restore a number of omitted words and phrases. However, in some cases, as the references were too broad or vague, I needed to add more information to the original texts. Also, I often had difficulty with finding an equivalent English word or expression to a Korean counterpart. Although this is a general issue of translation, it was the more challenging when I translated non-standard or colloquial forms of the Korean language used by my Korean youth informants. Consequently, these two issues of translation raised a fundamental question—to what extent should I translate? When I literally translated excerpts, the translated texts sometimes looked culturally eccentric. On the contrary, when I changed literal translations to make the meanings more natural to English speaking readers, I felt that the original meanings were somewhat lost. Facing such challenges, I followed three steps of translations. I first literally translated selected excerpts and then asked native English speakers to locate which parts were too culturally specific to understand. After reworking on the parts
pointed by the native English speakers, I asked native Korean bilingual speakers to confirm the translations. To show to what extent excerpts in Korean were translated, I present sample excerpts in Korean and English in Appendix 6.

4.6 Positionality and reflexivity

I embarked on this fieldwork as a native anthropologist (Narayan, 1993). I admit that building on my experiences of being raised and learning English in South Korea, I formulated research questions, met informants, and observed their performances. The following is a brief narrative of my English learning experiences. I entered an undergraduate program in English language education at one of the top-tier universities in South Korea right after the IMF crisis took place. As my parents witnessed the volatility of the economic boom and the collapse of job security in the Korean economy, my father advised me to major in English education, as graduates of the college of education were offered a certificate of the teacher in the public education sector by the government. Moreover, from his perspective, focusing on English looked the most promising as he believed that the demand for the global language would not diminish due to it being the most “secure” language. However, what I found in my undergraduate program was not the security of my job future but rather the politics of English. I was surprised that a number of classmates in my cohort spoke English proficiently, as my English learning experience by then was mostly concerned with studying grammar, vocabulary, reading, and listening for the nation-wide college examination. Later I learned that the classmates who were already proficient English speakers had lived abroad because of their parents’ jobs, or graduated from elite and selective high schools. I realized that their experiences and trajectories of English learning were entirely different from mine. Of course, I was not a “good” student in my undergraduate program; my less proficient English with a strong Korean accent was frequently pointed out by classmates and teachers, and my strategy was just to sit at the very back of the classroom and keep silence. I saw myself as embodying what J. S.-Y. Park (2009a) terms the ideology of self-deprecation. Among the good Korean speakers of English, I thought that my English “sucked.”
Before the fieldwork, I assumed that my past experiences of English learning would contribute to understandings of my informants’ ideologies and practices in a study abroad context. Further, I expected that because of my ethnicity and experiences that I thought would share with my informants, I would do research not only “on” and “for” them, but also “with” them (Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton, & Richardson, 1992)—seemingly the most ethical position as a qualitative researcher. I endeavored to become a member, if not a full one, of my key participants’ communities of practice and to invite them to my life sphere, as well. As a result, my relationship with key informants was highly intimate. They called me *hyŏng* (older brother to a male) or *oppa* (older brother to a female) rather than *sŏnsaengnim* (literally, teacher, but a formal address term for an older person). I actively participated in my informants’ events and activities, or in some sense, enjoyed my version of English study abroad, which I could not afford to undertake when I was a college student. With my participants, I went to house parties, pubs, and Korean restaurants. Eating and drinking together solidified our relationship. I also played baseball, went camping to Algonquin Park, and had a backpacking trip to New York City with some of my focal participants.

However, my intimate relationship with key informants and active participation in their social events did not mean that I was accepted as a full member of their community. As the fieldwork unfolded and my relationship with informants developed, I realized the difference in social positions and experiences of my informants and me. Thus, it seemed to me that doing research “with” them was a sort of self-justification of my position in the research. Especially, the gap came from my elite background of higher education—formerly a student of a top-tier university and current doctoral student of the University of Toronto. I similarly felt uncertainty about my future job in competitive academia, but my informants viewed me in a better situation to getting a job than what they confronted. Although my informants kindly and convivially shared their thoughts and experiences for my research, such reflection made me think that it was too self-interested to claim that this research was conducted on the equal, if not identical, epistemological and ontological stance between my informants and me. Thus, during fieldwork, the key issue for my reflexivity shifted from how to be with them, to how to understand, respect, and represent
their voices in my research. While being with them on a different stance, I tried to share “dialogue, explicitness, and honesty” (Cameron et al., 1992) with my informants.

When I began to analyze data and write the thesis, the significant issue that I struggled with was how to represent my informants’ voices (cf. Geertz, 1988). It was a thorny issue for me, not only because I was a knowledge producer, but also because I was a second language writer of ethnography. What I should address was not only my point of view in understanding informants’ life and voice, but also the translation of my understandings into English. Confronting these difficulties with representations, I strived to respect my informants’ voices and experiences without being deflected by my presuppositions especially on how they should behave or think (cf. Bucholtz, 2002). Furthermore, although I tried to offer more contextual information for potential readers, I decided to keep some Korean terms or expressions when they had culturally specific meanings. When necessary, I Romanised them, using the McCune-Reischauer system. I still admit that some parts of my explanations would look a bit simplified or vague as a consequence of linguistic and cultural translations (cf. Chow, 2014).

5 Overview of chapters

This thesis will trace the ways in which Korean students consume global English and culture for their future employment, but later for their cosmopolitan desire and leisure. It loosely consists of three parts. Chapters 2 and 3 investigate the normative and legitimate discourses of English study abroad, which have profound effects on the constructions of the promise of the educational investment and of guiding principles of living and studying while learning English abroad. My approach to discourse analysis is ethnographically informed rather than remaining in the textual analysis of key documents. Thus, in these chapters, I will examine how young Korean adults construct the image of a “successful” English study abroad, create effective strategies for their goals, and make corresponding decisions within the normative discourses of English study abroad in public and educational fields. Based on the normative discourses, the remaining chapters move to explore Korean students’ strategies for mobilizing and negotiating linguistic, cultural, and material resources in the course of their English study
abroad. Chapters 4 and 5 examine Korean students’ practices concerning “good” English and “good” English speakers in multilingual public and educational spaces. In both chapters, Korean students’ practices appear to be instrumentally motivated, strategic, and calculative as they tend to stick to the hegemonic ideology of successful English study abroad, that is, improving oral communicative skills in English. On the other hand, Chapters 6 and 7 navigate alternative ways of life and learning—cosmopolitan cultural consumption in the sites of tourism and everyday relationship in multicultural Toronto. These two chapters will illuminate that Korean learners want to pursue fun, enjoyment, and comfort in their transnational life.

Chapter 2, “‘Invest in me’: Accessing English study abroad,” traces the process in which Korean students recognize the necessity of English study abroad and access the private education industry. It shows why clients in the language business are college students or graduates of non-elite universities who do not have proficient English competence and overseas experiences. Especially, the reality that they are allowed to have this transnational experience when their parents financially support it, has profound effects on English study abroad students’ plans, goals, and morals for the making of successful educational investment.

Chapter 3, “‘Enlivening’ English: Valuing English abroad,” focuses on the analysis of language ideology supporting the promise of English study abroad. Drawing on the semiotic approach to language, I examine social and cultural meanings of two types of English in South Korea: English for standardized tests and English for oral communication skills. Following the metaphors used in the English study abroad industry, I term the first “dead” English and the latter “living” English. This ideological analysis reveals that the opposition in the types of English recurs on the spatial distinction in a way of justifying Western English speaking countries as the most promising space for acquiring English oral communication skills. However, language consumers have ambiguity in the value of “living” English, as the Korean job market still requires “dead” English and as there are a number of returnee students who have better competence of “living” English.

In Chapter 4, “Stratification of English speakers in multilingual Toronto: Navigating English language spaces,” I examine the ways in which Korean students
navigate different language communities in order to meet and talk with “good” English speakers. The boundaries of language communities are drawn along the lines of Korean speakers, local native English speakers, and non-Korean non-native English speakers. However, their trajectories of stratifying and accessing these communities are by no means straightforward, as mutual sociolinguistic and sociocultural stereotypes come into play. As a result, Korean students’ criteria on “good” English speakers are entangled. To disentangle the linguistic order, they compromise the ideal type of English interlocutors as those who help their English learning by giving explicit feedback and guidance on their English learning—what I call “pedagogical speaker.”

Chapter 5, “Class ‘shopping’ in learner-centered school: Navigating language commodities in the ELT industry,” enters into the language school, Lingua City, to explore the ways in which Korean students navigate and choose courses and programs. Their navigation reveals tensions caused by their concern over the convertibility of their English into legitimate linguistic capital. On the one hand, they seek classes that they think will help with oral communicative skills. As they discover that the quantity and quality of classroom communication are determined not only by the curricular but also by teachers, talking about and choosing “good” teachers becomes important practices among Korean students. On the other hand, they also consider certificate courses in their decision making, as they need to document their learning to utilize the certificates as a proof of qualification in their future job seeking. However, as they find that their class “shopping” cannot fully satisfy their needs in any manner, they justify their choices by valuing distinctive learning experiences in chosen programs.

Chapter 6, “Escaping from learning: Enjoying cosmopolitan tourism,” marks a shift in the focus of analysis from language investment to cultural consumption, and a shift in students’ morals of life from calculations for English gains to the enjoyment of a cosmopolitan lifestyle. I first examine the condition in which cosmopolitan leisure activities emerge—that is, burn-out by their obsession over English improvement. The affective condition allows them to suspend the normative moral of English learning and open up the possibility of enjoying life through a variety of cultural consumptions. In this chapter, I describe the pattern of cultural consumption through Korean students’ travel activities. Korean students shows that because of their desire for comfort from
transnational fatigue, their relationship in tourism tends to be confined to their co-ethnic friends.

Chapter 7, “Everyday fun in multicultural Toronto: Enjoying cosmopolitan relationships,” continues the investigation on South Korean students’ cultural consumption, with a particular focus on their everyday relationship-making. I explore the ways in which Korean students build and develop friendships with students from other countries, and the types of resources that they mobilize in this global friendship building. This relationship-making in transnational space reveals that popular and youth cultures of their home are employed to foster and enjoy light-hearted and jocular atmospheres. However, such non-elite and non-conventional experiences of cultural exchanges evoke a cosmopolitan insecurity, as Korean students not only feel that it is hard to build “sincere” relationships with foreign friends, but also find it difficult to transform their cosmopolitan experiences into legitimate culture capital in the South Korean job market.

South Korean youth’s journey of English study abroad does not end at the time that they return home. In a sense, their journey continues, as the experience of overseas education will reshape their life projects and trajectories that follow. No doubt that the most compelling for them is to find ways of mobilizing their transnational experiences as knowledge and skills for getting employment. However, rather than fully exploring it, the conclusion chapter will briefly describe their life after they return, based on my trips to South Korea and the continued connection to them online. I decided to do so, because most of them were still struggling to find a job and was a bit discouraged by the fact that South Korea’s labor market had gotten worse and by the fact that their material and immaterial investment had not sufficiently been rewarded yet. Following this description, I will conclude by revisiting the concept of language consumption and discussing what is the (im)possibility of language education in a late capitalist society.
CHAPTER TWO
“INVEST IN ME”: ACCESSING ENGLISH STUDY ABROAD

1 Introduction

On a Saturday in October 2013, I happened to speak with a middle-aged Korean man in Toronto, who organized baseball games between Korean immigrants and English study abroad students. On our way to a baseball park from Galleria, a Korean supermarket in Thornhill, a city within the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), he learned that I was conducting research on English study abroad, and asked me what I wanted to find out through my research. When I responded by telling him my key research question, “why do South Korean young adults engage in English study abroad?”, he laughed and then said that the answer was simple: “to learn English.” Moreover, he added: “they need English to get a job in Korea.” In fact, this was a common response to my research question. When I began fieldwork, I immediately came to realize that my question sounded self-explanatory to anyone who engaged in English study abroad, such as students, parents, teachers, and study abroad agents.

However, the answer, “to learn English to get a good job,” is a naturalized discourse on English study abroad (Park, 2010; Urciuoli, 2008). In this discourse, first of all, English study abroad is primarily naturalized as an opportunity for language training, even though the overseas education is driven by a variety of necessities and aspirations (Kinginger, 2009). In particular, recent research on study abroad has shown that yearning for exotic or cosmopolitan cultures plays an important role in student mobility practices (e.g., Doerr, 2013; Takahashi, 2013). However, South Koreans tend to presuppose that English study abroad is a type of educational and language investment (cf. Lo et al., 2015). Second, as the discourse naturalizes English study abroad students as South Korean young adults who want to acquire English capital for their jobs, it fails to illuminate that English study abroad is not an educational investment accessible to all South Korean students. As a part of private education, a particular group of Korean undergraduates are allowed into and attracted to the English study abroad market, as they feel it a necessity and can afford the educational expenditure. In this chapter, I will problematize these unquestioned assumptions of South Korean students’ English study
abroad. I will examine who can access this student mobility practice, why they choose it, and how the processes they use to gain access have consequences that affect their ways of life and studying abroad.

In this chapter, I will first go into the market discourses of English study abroad to identify whom the stakeholders in the market, especially study abroad agents, see as their primary customers. Then, I will examine why my informants decided to pursue English study abroad and how they accessed the market. These two sections will reveal that the majority of potential customers in this education market are undergraduate students of middle-class families who have not had other global experiences and do not have a competitive command of English. Also, the sections will demonstrate that the most important factor in accessing the market and realizing the educational necessity is to obtain parents’ financial support for their English study abroad. Finally, I will examine how students’ dependence on parents’ economic capital shapes their ideologies and practices in their overseas study and life.

2 Promoting the necessity of English study abroad

2.1 Marketing English study abroad

When I looked for an entry point into the discursive terrain of English study abroad in South Korea, I was led to analyze marketing discourses in the study abroad agency industry. The business sector, called yuhagwŏn, has played a central role in mediating the transnational opportunity to South Korean students (Introduction). As part of the private education sector, yuhagwŏn has created and promoted a series of discursive sites promising the value of English study abroad. For instance, they hold study abroad fairs or orientations and run branches in locations easily accessible to potential clients, such as on college campuses or in areas where a large number of young adults spend time. In those places, they display and distribute brochures and flyers. Their websites are also well-designed for prospective customers to navigate needed information with ease, and even in bookstores, a section is allocated to study abroad guidebooks written by those who engage in the study abroad agency business. The marketing discourses and strategies at those sites not only ensure the benefits of English study abroad, but also have a
profound impact on students’ construction of the image of what successful English study abroad looks like and on corresponding decision-making. For this reason, Dongil said, “Students are only 60 or 70% sure whether English study abroad will benefit them or not, but the agency makes it 100%” (Conversation, September 2013).

Expectedly, the marketing documents promote the necessity of English study abroad by associating transnational education with the discourse of global talent, which the government and corporations highlight as an important feature of ideal employees in a globalizing society (Hong & Ryoo, 2013). The market discourse stresses that English language fluency and global awareness are two requirements to become a global talent. For instance, a guidebook presents the necessity of English study abroad as follows:

Should I go abroad to study English?
If one is asked to choose a necessary skill indispensable to undergraduates living in this era, almost everyone will choose ‘English.’ ‘The language to communicate with the world’ is a prerequisite for companies which are faced with endless competition to stand in the centre of the world (succeed), so then presumably they will consider English as the most fundamental of the fundamental qualifications when hiring a talent. *(Start to study English abroad in the U.S., p. 14, italics added)*

The author asserts that English is the most important competence that a global talent must have. According to him, this is because English is the language of communication in today’s business world. Following the highlighting of the importance of English competence, the guidebook presents global awareness as another benefit of English study abroad:

You also need to know that English study abroad is not just for English. It is unavoidable that there is a huge difference in worldview between those who have frequently traveled abroad since they were young and those who have never travel abroad. (…) The level of difference in the view of the world between students who studied English abroad and students who did not cannot be overcome. (p. 16)

Taking the example of the inevitable difference in “worldview” between those with overseas travels and those without, the author promises that English study abroad will offer an overseas experience that helps to broaden students’ perspectives. In another
guidebook, the “worldview” is often termed as “global awareness”: “In order to achieve the self-image of global elite, two competences are absolutely necessary, which are the command of English as a global communication tool and the ability to understand diverse cultures through international experiences” (Be Successful in English Study Abroad, p. 17).

The alignment of the necessity of English study abroad with the discourse of global talent is not unique, as “global talent” has been a buzzword to justify international education or training. What I found more interesting in the contemporary English study abroad agency market were its marketing strategies to promote the necessity of English study abroad. First of all, the market offers various types of educational commodities and services, which vary across countries, cities, language institutes, and programs. For instance, a language school brochure that I obtained at a study abroad fair in South Korea advertises that the school offers the following tayangan k’ösů (diverse courses):

- General / Semi-intensive / Intensive English courses
- Business English courses
- General English / Business English courses in small groups
- Test preparation course: Cambridge ESOL (FCE, CAE, CPE), IELTS, TOEFL, and TOEIC
- Academic English
- TESOL certificate
- Career development: Internship, volunteer
- English through hobbies: Dancing, acting, cooking, etc.

This list indicates that in today’s English study abroad market, the types of English education are divided into more than communicative English and academic English. Language schools include internships and volunteer programs that will grant opportunities to use English beyond a classroom setting. Also, students may improve their business skills and knowledge by taking business English and career development programs, or learn English by taking part in leisure activities such as dancing or acting.

In a broad sense, the diversification of language programs indicates the ways in which the English teaching market has developed as part of the language industry, while dealing with the saturation of the market. On the one hand, it segments, specifies, and diversifies language courses. For instance, Business English programs are divided more
specifically, for example, into Business Culture and Business Communication at Lingua City (Chapter 5). On the other hand, the English teaching industry attempts to combine language skills with non-linguistic skills, such as workplace knowledge or other cultural knowledge, and present language curricula as a packaged set of linguistic and non-linguistic skills (Allan, 2013; Urciuoli, 2008). Internship programs represent this trend. Such market strategies of the segmentation and packaging of English skills are justified as ways of satisfying student-clients’ needs and as key to producing promised outcomes of educational investment.

The diversification of educational commodities is not limited to language programs. Choosing host countries, cities, schools, and accommodations is also part of the calculation among multiple considerations. For example, another brochure suggests “ten commandments” that students should consider in choosing a language school: 1) targeted pronunciation (American vs. British), 2) tuition, 3) the percent of Korean students, 4) diversity of courses, 5) size of business, 6) weather, 7) affiliation (university vs. private), 8) the institute’s recognition/prestige in South Korea, 9) self-evaluation of English proficiency, and 10) availability of alternatives (in case of dissatisfaction). Given the degree of specification, it may require an amount of reflective knowledge on consumers themselves.

However, the requirement of self-knowledge caused by the diversification of educational commodities is complemented by the market’s strengthening of consultations with clients. This is another noticeable marketing strategy in the agency industry. The strategy indicates that in a series of consulting sessions, agents will employ its expert knowledge to help students choose the “most suitable” language program and create a successful overseas educational path. For instance, Yuhangnet ‘ū (Study abroad NET), a large, nationwide English study abroad agency in South Korea, offers multiple and customized rounds of consultation. The company’s brochure reads:

‘Reliable study abroad consultation!’ Yuhangnet ‘ū will run anytime and anywhere. Sign up to Yuhangnet ‘ū, and then you can have online 1:1 personalized consultation, real-time online consultation, toll-free phone consultation (1588-1377), and on-site consultation in 21 centers nationwide anytime and anywhere. Yuhangnet ‘ū will be your reliable study abroad partner by
recommending and planning courses tailored to individual goals and plans of study abroad and offering cost estimates.

The agency proudly advertises that clients can have agents’ help whenever and wherever they would like. The purposes of the consultations, it argues, are to help students choose and make a plan tailored to their goals, and to estimate reasonable costs of English study abroad.

2.2 Changing consumers in the market

The analysis of promotional documents of English study abroad showed me the development of the market and the advanced marketing strategies. However, when I researched deeper into the agency business, I found that the English study abroad market was not promising but “in crisis.” The number of South Korean language study abroad students has stagnated since the early 2000s (Appendix 7). A recent survey carried out with agencies in South Korea reported that the market was struggling, facing negative growth (Study Travel Magazine, March 2014, October 2015). The study abroad agent, Sangkyung, also told me, “the boom is over.”

Although there must be multiple reasons for such market situations, Sangkyung primarily indicated the cause of the market situations as a shift in students’ orientations to English study abroad. He stated that previously it was actually a boom, as Korean young adults blindly went abroad in the name of English learning or “overcoming English fear” – “They decided to pursue English study abroad, as their friends or relatives did” (Interview, April 2013). Sangkyung, however, told me about two characteristics of contemporary English study abroad students: first, they are more goal-oriented and instrumentally motivated, and second, they are highly concerned about the cost-benefit of their investment. He confirmed that students tended to view English study abroad as part of career development rather than as opportunities for cultural experiences, saying that, “Students tend to go to destinations with clear objectives and goals. Their goal is to develop spec for their future career.” Also, he viewed them as more aware of the expenditure of English study abroad and the expected benefits from the investment. He pointed out that such a shift in students’ orientation had been more noticeable since the
global economic crisis in 2008, known as sŏbŭp’ŭraim crisis (the U.S. subprime mortgage crisis).

In South Korea, international mobility of citizens began to increase in 1989, when the government liberalized overseas tourism (Chun & Han, 2015). Following this measure, an increasing number of South Korean university students began to go backpacking abroad and undertake language study abroad. This trend of transnational travel and education was reinforced in the early 1990s, as the civil government stressed that internationalization should be the new national agenda for prosperity. A series of liberal, democratic, internationalized social changes and reforms in the late 1980s and the early 1990s reshaped South Koreans’ global sensitivity (H. Cho, 2015). Especially, the youth at the beginning of the 1990s, called the New Generation, actively appropriated and consumed new global and Western cultural commodities. As a liberal and global subject, they had the aspiration for cosmopolitanism. For them, going abroad was a valuable opportunity to realize their desire to become global citizens. The boom of English study abroad in those periods was grounded in the country’s social transformations and the young people’s new subjectivity.

However, Sangkyung’s perception of contemporary English study abroad reveals that their motivation for English study abroad is based more on the issue of employability – namely, being more employable. For this reason, Sangkyung stated that if English study abroad simply offered general ESL learning opportunities, the market could not be sustained: “If English study abroad in Canada is only to overcome English fear, it is hard to compete with English education commodities in Korea or English study abroad in the Philippines in terms of cost.” He also argued that the concern about the high cost of English study abroad in Western English-speaking countries had led both students and their parents to navigate alternative types of English education in South Korea, such as immersion-model programs or English study abroad in the Philippines or India. Such development of English teaching in South Korea and the budgetary burden of studying English in Canada appear to undermine the condition that attracts potential students to

---

5 In Korea, yŏngŏhoehwa ŏhagwŏn (English conversation) has been taught by native English-speaking instructors in ŏhagwŏn (private English institutes). This type of language teaching industry also exists in Japan (Hiramoto, 2013; Kubota & Mckay, 2009). However, recently, several major private English schools in Korea offer intensive English programs where native English-speaking instructors teach all English skills in English, including reading, writing, speaking, listening, presentation, discussion, etc.
English study abroad in Western English-speaking countries. Sangkyung clarified that the marketing strategies, such as the variety of language programs and consulting culture, should be understood as responses to the market threats.

According to Kang and Abelmann (2011), a shift in the discourse of early study abroad, another common type of student mobility in South Korea, occurred in the late 2000s. In the 1990s, early study abroad or pre-college study abroad (PSA) was considered an alternative education for fostering global human development. However, in the 2000s, as the difficulty with the success in PSA spread, it was understood that PSA was reliant on calculated and strategic preparations in Korea. Kang and Abelmann (2011) assert that the shift results from “the escalating social and economic anxieties about young people’s futures in post-IMF South Korea, increasing bifurcation of South Korea’s class structure, and the maturation and escalation of PSA” (p. 90). In a similar vein, Sangkyung’s account demonstrates that English study abroad has been reshaped. This is due to the perception that English study abroad is a part of skills development to deal with job insecurity, that the access to the market is governed by the family’s ability to afford the expenses, and that the English education industry in South Korea has become more competitive.

Sangkyung clarified what composition of Korean young adults amounted to the majority of English study abroad students in such market situations:

Excerpt 2.1: Conversation with Sangkyung (April 2013)
Sangkyung: A large number of students coming here for English study abroad are not from elite universities. Of course, kyŏngjeryŏk (the financial means) of the family should be the foundation. If the family does not have the financial means, it is hard to go for English study abroad. Also, students from elite universities go abroad through the student exchange programs offered through their universities or do not have to study English abroad because their English is already good. Students from non-elite universities, however, need the experience of English study abroad for employment. Some of them come because they do not want to be viewed as kungnaep’’a (students without overseas experience) when seeking a job, but for this, the financial means of students’ families must exist.

He asserts that the majority of clients in the English study abroad market represent students at non-elite universities from families with sufficient economic capital whose
English abilities are not high. He argues that the population included in these criteria are most likely to be attracted to the market because they feel a greater necessity for linguistic and cultural forms of capital for their employment.

I found that as I met Korean students in the field, his assertion turned out to be true, as seen in the profile of my key informants (Introduction). In general, they were attracted to the English study abroad market, as they believed in the necessity of English and global experience for their future. The necessity of English was particularly important, as their English proficiency was not sufficiently high and as their educational position of being from a non-elite university was not competitive in the job market. Most of them also made sure to confirm their parents’ financial support before pursuing this expensive transnational education. In the following sections, drawing on informants’ accounts, I will detail the processes of recognizing the necessity of English study abroad and accessing the market, and the consequences for their English study abroad trajectories.

3 Recognizing necessity and accessing the market

3.1 Necessity of global experiences

In globalizing the South Korean economy, the government and corporations have emphasized global experience as a necessary qualification of successful job seekers. A government report based on the analysis of applications with 100 corporations indicates that 37 companies require applicants to include overseas experiences in their portfolio (Youth Council, 2014). Similarly, an article of Seoul Shinmun (December 7, 2011), titled “Corporations egging on high-cost English study abroad,” points out that undergraduates often decide to go abroad to study English as hiring corporations ask them to describe their overseas experiences in application forms, cover letters, or interviews.

Facing such emphasis on global experience, Korean undergraduates have regarded it as one of the qualifications, or an item of spec, which they should possess to position themselves as competitive employees in the job market.6 The logic of spec is

---

6 In 2002, the Ministry of Employment and Labor presented five key areas that young adult job seekers deemed as important to their job applications: college rank, GPA, TOEIC score, English study abroad, and
grounded in the fact that successful employment is a positional competition (Brown et al., 2003; Brown et al., 2011); therefore, the lack of a single item of skills or qualifications is meant to be in a less competitive and less distinctive position among the pool of job seekers. Because of this mechanism of skills development, Korean young adults strive to take any global experience, even though they do not have a specific expectation about how their global experience will be evaluated and rewarded in the labor market. For instance, Geonyoung told me that her English study abroad was an educational investment not to gain a head start on skills development, but to lessen a risk in future job seeking:

Excerpt 2.2: Interview with Geonyoung (July 2013)
Geonyoung: English study abroad is like, “oh, you’re going, then I’ll go, too.” This is because if I don’t go, I would be disadvantaged in the future when I’m job seeking. You may know how Koreans are. See the case of TOEIC. When the government and corporations said that TOEIC was important, all of the Koreans went to TOEIC prep institutes to study for the TOEIC. If you don’t have global experience, you’d feel anxious. Imagine that you look less attractive because you don’t have global experience even though you don’t think that you’re worse than others in terms of other skills and qualifications.

Geonyoung’s account on why she decided to pursue English study abroad reveals that it is a strategy to secure her position in the competitive job market. She was concerned that she would have been left behind if she had not had an experience that others had. As she realized that the majority of Korean young adults sought global experiences for their future, she decided to follow the trend.

In South Korea, there are several types of opportunities for overseas experiences that undergraduates can seek; undergraduate global internship programs, university student exchange programs, working holiday programs, and language study abroad, among others. The difference in these programs lies in who funds the overseas education and living expenses. As the first two programs are wholly or partially financed by governmental agencies or universities, they are most attractive to those who desire to go abroad. However, these programs not only select a limited number of students, but also

skill certificates (e.g., computer, profession, etc.). In 2012, it added to them three more qualifications: volunteer experience, internship experience, and awards.
require qualifications to apply, including English proficiency. Thus, students who already have a high GPA, English competence, and other experiences are more likely to be selected. The competition for being selected is fierce. For example, WEST (Work, English Study, Travel), one of the undergraduate global internship programs sponsored by the government, requires applicants to have all of the following: 1) a TOEIC score of 750 or higher, 2) a Level 5 or higher in TOEIC speaking, and 3) a minimum GPA of 3.375/4.5, 3.225/4.3, or 3.0/4.0. Although the minimum required levels of TOEIC and TOEIC speaking tests may not be considered advanced, the fact that English proficiency is one of the considerations for successful selection makes applicants believe that those with better English are more competitive.

When undergraduates fail to be selected or even are disallowed to submit applications due to insufficient English ability or not having the minimum GPA, they find that the other two options, working holiday and English study abroad, are good options available to them. The difference between the two options is whether they are allowed to work in order to cover their living expenses in host countries. Working holiday students can make their own living overseas without full or partial financial support from their parents. However, the trade-off is that they would have fewer opportunities to study and improve their English proficiency, although they would be exposed to English to varying degrees, depending upon the type of work. Under such circumstances, most of the undergraduate students who want to go overseas have two choices to consider: working versus studying, and financial independence versus parental support. Korean young adults should make a decision, depending on their goals and financial situation. English study abroad is the option that Korean students choose when they need to improve English even though they are using their savings in South Korea or receive financial support from their parents in order to go abroad.

3.2 Necessity of English skills

English study abroad as a type of global experience is facilitated particularly by the necessity for the improvement of English skills. Specifically, prospective clients of English study abroad assume the necessity when they perceive their English proficiency
as not sufficiently high given the requirement in the job market. Further, they also tend to speculate that if they have advanced levels of English proficiency, they will have more opportunities when seeking jobs. They identify the potential of English study abroad not only because of the reality that they should have “good” English competence as a requirement for obtaining a job, but also because of the promise that better English will enable them to be considered for more jobs (Introduction).

To illustrate, Insung’s account below on his reason for English study abroad shows the double necessities of English:

Excerpt 2.3: Interview with Insung (June 2013)
Insung: I decided to study English abroad for an OPIc (Oral Proficiency Interview by Computer®) score. When I apply for a job, a high OPIc score would be an advantage. A TOEIC score is a basic requirement. Also, I am not sure whether I am qualified enough to be hired by Samsung or LG, but I can get a job there if I can speak English fluently.

Insung’s main motivation of his English study abroad experience is concerned with improving his English, as the language is one of the essential competences in the South Korean job market. Insung hopes to improve oral English skills (Chapter 3) in particular, as he believes that strong spoken English is “an advantage” in obtaining a job in prestigious corporations such as Samsung and LG. More importantly, Insung’s account demonstrates how the necessity for English is established among South Korean job seekers: English as requirement and English as promise.

First of all, Korean students have faced the reality that they should acquire “good” English abilities, as the language plays a gatekeeper role in recruitment—thus, English serves as a requirement. In the above excerpt, Insung’s first reason for English study abroad is to obtain high scores of OPIc, a standardized English speaking test. In today’s South Korean recruitment system, a majority of job applicants need to submit not only a TOEIC score, a written standardized English test, but also other English speaking tests such as OPIc, as hiring companies do not view the first test as reflecting applicants’ communicative competence (Jang, 2015; also, Chapter 3). Further, corporations began to introduce alternative methods of evaluating applicants’ oral skills in English, including English interviews or presentations. These changes in language policies in recruitment
were a burden on Insung, as he had not studied spoken English nor could he speak English properly. He told me that after his graduation from high school, TOEIC prep schools were his only means of learning English where he learned vocabulary and grammar. As such, he needed to find innovative ways to improve his English, especially his speaking ability.

However, one of the dilemmas that Insung faced in terms of his investment in English was his perception that in the field of work that he was pursuing, industrial design, English was not used extensively, and that English was not even a core skill for work. He often complained about the reality about investing in English for getting a job. He said, “I’ll just want to draw, but I won’t work in a marketing department” (Interview, June 2013). Similarly, Dongil, an undergraduate majoring in computer engineering, expressed the irony of investing in English; “Actually, in my major, we don’t need English too much. ((laugh)) If we have great programming skills, we can work for more prominent employers, such as Samsung, Naver, NHN, Daum (all leading South Korean IT companies)” (Conversation in English, July 2013).

However, the dilemma is bound to be compromised by the potential of having “good” English. Korean students believe in the promise that if they succeed in acquiring higher levels of English proficiency through English study abroad, they would have much better options for employment. Insung expressed above that he could work at prestigious companies if he could “speak English fluently.” Dongil justified his investment in English by saying that Google would hire him if he improved his English significantly. I also noted that a number of Korean students in English study abroad had interests in oegukkye kiŏp (foreign affiliated companies), or multinational corporations (MNCs). These companies have been ranked high in Korean job seekers’ preference for employers, as they believe that in contrast to Korean-owned companies, whose workplace cultures tend to be authoritative and force overtime work, MNCs may have a more democratic workplace culture between employees and managers, offer better corporate welfare, and respect employees’ privacy and families, as well as offer an increased possibility of working overseas (cf. Schnurr, 2013, particularly see Chapter 3; J. S.-Y. Park, 2013). Because of their global presence in the business arena, what counts to apply for and work at MNCs is the command of a language for business communication, which is English.
English study abroad students speculate that the international education would not only offer them a certain level of English proficiency for job application recruitment, but also help them to find positions with prestigious and high-quality workplace cultures.

3.3 Access to the agency industry and the necessity of economic capital

In April 2014, I visited a private language school in Busan, South Korea, to collect flyers about language courses, particularly TOEIC courses. In the lobby, I saw brochures and flyers of one of the largest English study abroad agencies being displayed next to the main entrance of the building. When I went and skimmed them, a male who looked to be in his late twenties approached me, asking, “Are you interested in English study abroad?” Noticing that I was looking over flyers about Canada, he added, “You can learn not only English, but also obtain certificates such as TESOL or take cooking classes in Canada. By taking these programs, you can have more opportunities to use English in Canada.” Having tried to attract my attention, he invited me to a free consultation to provide me with more details, but I refused for a research ethical reason. Instead, I happened to meet Insu, who had just finished his free consultation, and spoke with him about his experience of the consultation.

Insu was a fourth-year university student majoring in electronic engineering at a local private university. As he believed that his English was not good and had not studied English intensively since high school, he felt that he needed to improve his English, after all, to get a good job. He had a chance to speak with a study abroad agent, because he was wondering how much English study abroad would improve his English. He had heard that some students could not speak English very well even after their study abroad. If it was true, he thought that English study abroad was “a waste of money and time.” He told me, however, that the agent consulting him kept saying that whether English study abroad would improve English or not or whether it would help him to get a good job or not, should depend on how well he would set up an English study abroad plan. When I asked, “What did the agent say about how you can set up the plan well?”, he replied, “The agent suggested that I have to consider three things at this stage; my English level, my parents’ willingness to pay for English study abroad, and my willingness to study
hard.” Insu added, “The agent said that, first of all, I needed to talk to my parents, because they will be the ones giving me money for my English study abroad. Depending on how much my parents can support me, the agent said, she could give me more detailed information and propose suitable programs for me. And the agent added, once I talk to my mother, I should come to the branch with my mother for more special consulting.”

As investment into overseas education confronts failure stories that undermine its necessity, an alternative discourse emerges that students’ success in study abroad is determined not only by their experiences and efforts during study abroad but also by pre-existing knowledge and skills that they acquired pre-departure in Korea. Kang and Abelmann (2011) call this discourse *domestication*. They traced this changing nature of early study abroad, *chogiyuhak*, by analyzing the media coverage in the 2000s, and found that three aspects of the domestication of *chogiyuhak* were suggested for successful *chogiyuhak* in the mid-2000s:

(1) education/knowledge capital—knowledge required for mobilizing effective PSA (e.g., supplementary education and the timing of PSA); (2) characterological capital—attributes children must have to succeed at PSA; and (3) parental capital—assets that PSA parents must have in order to properly support their children and PSA. (p. 99)

In fact, Insu’s conversation with the study abroad agent demonstrates that the domestication is also occurring in English study abroad. First, students need to have self-knowledge about their current level of English. According to the level of English, the itinerary and language programs are varied. Insu said, “The agent suggests that only when students have basic levels of grammar knowledge and English conversation skills can they maximize their improvement in English by studying abroad.” The agent’s suggestion implies that English study abroad is not to learn basic knowledge and skills of English, but to practice what students have learned so far in real and authentic communication situations. Thus, it is advised that the basic knowledge of English should be “mastered” before they leave, for example, for Canada. I also observed the market’s highlighting of the importance of having basic English skills pre-departure, in an orientation for potential English study abroad learners. In the orientation that I attended, an agent kept saying, “the definition of English study abroad is the process of *experiencing* and *training*
language” and “’yŏngŏrŭl be pdbinŭn kwajŏng’” (literally, the process of attaching English to the mouth, or of getting used to speaking English) (Field notes, March 14, 2014). For this reason, most of the guidebooks and brochures stress that the success in English study abroad is determined by a pre-departure study of English. They recommend students to start to study basic grammar and vocabulary, for example, to complete Raymond Murphy’s *Grammar in Use*, once they decide to go abroad. Agencies often provide their clients with free vouchers for private English conversation schools to help them acquire such English knowledge. If students’ level of English is too low, agencies also recommend them to go to the Philippines first, where they will learn basic English competence and foster familiarity with English.

Second, students should know who they are— in other words, they should be aware of their own character. Specifically, agents argue that students who are organized, passionate, resolute, and extroverted are more likely to succeed in English study abroad. According to Insu, his agent highlighted the importance of being resolute and organized, while warning that overseas students’ lives are more likely to be very debauched and aimless. Guidebooks commonly say that when students are, or pretend to be, passionate and extroverted, they have more opportunities to meet and befriend English-speaking locals. More interestingly, Insu’s agent said, without such resolution, he would not be able to persuade his parents to send him abroad: “who would like to give money to a child who does not have the will to study hard?” This point leads to the last but the most important consideration—parents’ economic capital.

As demonstrated in my conversation with Insu, whether he could go abroad or what trajectories he would set up, relied upon his parents’ willingness to fund his English study abroad. As Insu’s last comment implies, prospective students should know whether their parents are willing to invest money into their English study abroad, and if so, how much they can invest. The parents’ economic capital has a significant effect on all options that students will make later. For this reason, the agent who consulted with Insu even asked him to bring his mother to the next consulting session. Without parental consent, Korean young adults, a majority of whom is still financially dependent on their parents, cannot easily proceed with their desire to study English abroad. Indeed, Korean students stated that in their pre-departure period, the most significant moment was when their
parents decided to invest. They added that once it was done, the follow-up choices could be made with ease and rapidity, as agencies offered service for choosing language programs, making a long-term plan, and providing advice for successful English study abroad.

In fact, Insung’s account of how he accessed the English study abroad market was not that different from Insu’s experience explained so far. As Insung decided to study English abroad, he visited multiple study abroad agencies in his city. He thought that as he had experience with studying for the TOEIC, he had good knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, and he needed to focus only on speaking. However, when his agent heard his TOEIC scores, the agent told him that as his English competence was not good enough, he would not make an improvement even if he went directly to Canada. What the agent advised Insung to do was to study basic English first. Following this suggestion, he studied English in the Philippines for the first three months and then moved to Canada for the next six months. Furthermore, Insung highlighted that it was his parents that supported the expenditure of his English study abroad. When he said to his parents that he needed to study English abroad, his father complied with funding him, because his father’s company, one of the largest auto and heavy vehicle companies in the world, supported Insung’s university tuition for four years. As his parents did not have to pay for his university tuition, they were willing to invest in this overseas education when Insung asked.

The parental willingness to financially support their children’s English study abroad reveals that English study abroad students are mostly from middle-class families who can afford the expense of this lucrative educational experience. However, most of my informants told me that the process of asking for financial support was not without conflict, as their families were not affluent, but they narrowly had the financial capacity to support their English study abroad. In some cases, recognizing the necessity of English study abroad, the students persuaded or negotiated with their parents. For instance, Joochan states:

Excerpt 2.4: Interview with Joochan (March 2013)
Joochan: It might be called sobu (negotiation). After I had decided to study English abroad, I told my parents that I would earn and pay back as much as
I spent on English study abroad, after I got a good job. I just asked my parents to invest during the period of my stay in Toronto. I am trying not to feel sorry for my parents anymore.

Before he went to Canada for his study, Joochan negotiated with his parents. Such negotiation could successfully be made because both Joochan and his parents believed in the potential that English study abroad has in contributing to his employability in the future. Although he was initially sorry about asking his parents for financial support, Joochan made a deal with his parents by promising to pay back his parents later. As he believes that the investment will bring him future rewards, he wants to relieve the emotional burden of indebtedness during English study abroad.

4 Effects of parents’ economic capital on learners’ life and learning

4.1 Hard work and austerity in overseas study and life

As young adults’ employment in prestigious positions is getting difficult, one of the recent educational phenomena in neoliberal South Korea is that parents’ educational investment in their children has been extended to the tertiary education level. Korean (upper) middle-class parents think that it is a better strategy for their children to invest their time and effort into developing qualifications and skills for future employment, such as improving their GPA, English, and completing internships, rather than distracting themselves by working part-time or full-time. Korean undergraduates similarly assume that if their parents have the financial capacity to support their skills development, it is a better option for them to depend on their parents, as the balance between studying and working is challenging and can affect their university life and career path development (H. Cho, 2015). However, their dependence on parental economic capital for skills development has had profound consequences on their emotions and how they approach their education (H. Cho, 2015). Above all, as Joochan exposed in the above interview, most of them feel not only thankful but also sorry for their parents who are supporting them. While they thank their parents for sparing a portion of family income for their education, they also feel sorry that they impose a financial burden on their family, even though they are adults who are legally allowed to work for their living. South Korean
undergraduates’ reality and emotions are well-documented in the following newspaper article:

Today’s university students call themselves $t\text{"u}nggol\ p\text{"u}reik\'\text{"o}$ (spine breaker). This is because they continue to register in university programs even though they should be economically independent, and because they place enormous burdens on their parents in the name of preparing for job seeking. The yearly university tuition is almost 10 million Won (approximately 10,000 CAD), and their monthly living costs are much higher than a million Won (1,000 CAD). Moreover, the expenditure on their education should be beyond their parents’ (economic) capability in order to adequately prepare for competitive employment and spec competition ($\text{Hankuk Ilbo}$, August 27, 2014).

The reality that Korean students need parents’ economic support for successful skills development makes them self-depreciate themselves as $t\text{"u}nggol\ p\text{"u}reik\'\text{"o}$, literally meaning spine breaker. This mixed Korean-English word is language borrowed from Korean youths’ slang, originating from an equivalent Korean idiom, $t\text{"u}nggori\ pur\text{"oji\text{"da}}$ (spine has broken). As $t\text{"u}nggol$ figuratively means parents’ labor to support their family life, this term used by Korean young adults suggests that they exploit parents’ labors or other economic resources for their success in future employment. Consequently, the dependence on parents serves as a source of their indebtedness. The intensity of their indebtedness is usually greater when the investment is monetarily substantial and uncommon, as with English study abroad.

Broadly speaking, parents’ educational investment into their children and children’s dependence on them has its root in South Korean education fever (Seth, 2002). Parents are willing to invest their material resources into their children’s education to enable the family’s upward social mobility during the country’s development period and to ensure class reproduction in the bipolarizing class structure of a neoliberalized society. Especially, children’s dependence on parents’ financial supports have now been reinforced, as individual development of skills and qualifications for employability are taking place predominantly in private education markets, rather than in government sponsored social programs.
South Korean young adults’ indebtedness to their parents leads them to be highly conscious of their learning behaviors and outcomes. At Lingua City, one of the stereotypes of Korean students was that they “study” (kongbuhada) English hard and seriously. Teachers and non-Korean students, particularly Latin American and European students, often said that Korean students were keen to study English during English study abroad, while Latin American students tended to perceive English study abroad as part of tourism and English learning as taking place in everyday practices outside of the language school. For example, they described Korean students as “caring about class and absence,” “doing homework in full,” “reviewing or being prepared before the test,” and “loving to go to the library.” Even though Korean students do not deny that English can be learned by doing activities outside of the classroom, in comparison to backpackers and working holiday workers, they tend to position themselves firmly as English language learners; even though they admit that tourism is part of their English study abroad, they maintain that their main goal is to study and improve English. Yunseok’s account below demonstrates how Korean students draw the boundary between “study” and “play”:

Excerpt 2.5: Conversation with Yunseok (December 2013)
Yunseok: In fact, there are guys who come to study English abroad but only play and kill their time without studying. Whenever I see such guys, I wonder why they come here. Indeed, all of the Korean undergraduates want to study English abroad. They can go abroad only when their families can afford it (chibe yōyuga itta). But English study abroad is different from overseas travel. I have traveled to many places, but this is different. I have to stay in a place for a longer period, so I am more likely to feel lonely and bored. I have been paying about 40 million Won (approximately 40,000 CAD) to come and study English here, and, naturally, I sometimes ask myself if it is a waste (akkapta). For example, I keep thinking how much my English has improved. When I meet a guy who looks like he hasn’t been here as long as me but speaks English better than me, I cannot avoid reflecting on what I have been doing here.

Yunseok points out that some of the English study abroad students come and “play” during their journey. He cannot understand why they decided to go abroad in the disguise of learning English, given the amount of money this overseas education costs. Further, based on his experiences of tourism, he argues that overseas travel is different from English study abroad, in the sense that English study abroad students stay for a
longer period with a clear motivation to learn English, while spending tuition, although this often causes emotional difficulty. Because of the purpose of English learning, he adds, he always evaluates how much his English has improved, and if his English has not improved as much as other friends, he is anxious whether the investment might be “a waste.” His accounts reveal that the degree of English improvement is often reduced to the monetary calculation in this private educational investment.

Further, while highlighting that English study abroad is for learning and not for playing, Korean English study abroad students tend to stereotype the group of “playing” Korean students as “bad” learners:

Excerpt 2.6: Interview with Insung (June 2013)
In Chull: What do you think about Korean students at school?
Insung: Some study hard and others play.
In Chull: How do they play?
Insung: They really play. They do not come to school.
In Chull: Ah, really?
Insung: They come late or do not come at all. Or they just hang out.
In Chull: Ah.
Insung: And they use Korean. They are not willing to use English, and just speak in Korean whenever it is allowed. There are some guys who do not have a passion to study English. But most of the students try to study hard.

Like Yunseok, Insung also mentions that there are some Korean students who are more likely to “play” in the school, although most of the Korean classmates study hard. He characterizes the former type of students as being frequently absent, hanging out mostly with Korean students, speaking Korean, and with a lack of passion for learning English. In another interview, Jungmin called them tünggol püreik’ő (Field notes, August 10, 2013).

However, Korean students face a contradiction regarding studying hard, because, in the English study abroad context, they can practice English anywhere unless they meet Koreans and speak in Korean; in Canada, they do not have to be in a library to study English. The issue for them here is, as Insung said, “it is not a small amount of money spent on going out” (Interview, June 2013). Other students also said, “it costs 40-50 bucks to have dinner and coffee. In Korea, we can enjoy time with friends with this amount of money all day long!” (Group interview, November 2013). Considering that all
of the living costs also come from their parents as part of English study abroad expenses, they become more conscious of their spending. Thus, they tend to weigh the cost between hanging out and the opportunity to practice English. The calculation depends on individuals; some prefer to stay at home or study in a library, whereas others love to go out and try to take the opportunity to speak English. In any case, if they judge that the environment will not help them practice English, they will not go out.

This is why one can see a number of Korean students studying in public libraries in Toronto. Students’ passion for studying hard and improving English often motivates them to go to the library when they do not have special plans or if they are concerned about the budget of outdoor activities. At library, Korean students do their assignments or review what they learned in schools, watch midu (American TV dramas) to practice their listening skills and learn native English speakers’ expressions, or study grammar and vocabulary especially using Grammar in Use. Some of them also study for the TOEIC if they have to take the TOEIC upon their return to Korea or if they hope to monitor how much their English has improved during their English study abroad period. The Toronto Reference Library, located near Yonge St. and Bloor St., is the most popular among Korean students because of its architecture, size, location, and the wider collection of ESL workbooks and references.

Their concern over the spending appears even in non-learning moments (Chun & Han, 2015). They change their accommodations from homestay to renting a room in an apartment, believing that the latter can save them money. When they plan to travel, they strive to find reasonable hotel and transportation options as much as they can (Chapter 6). “Studying hard” and “spending reasonably” are principled ways of managing their English study abroad to lessen the burden on their parents while maximizing the outcome of their English learning.

In fact, the patterns of studying hard and spending frugally are somewhat different from the public image of earlier South Korean English study abroad students. In the early stage of English study abroad in the 1990s, the image was “spoiled rich kids” who fled and killed time abroad because they failed to adapt to South Korea’s competitive education environment (Kang & Abelmann, 2011; Chun & Han, 2015). Although the image was recently attenuated, English study abroad is still perceived as an excessive
educational investment, because, although students spend a large amount of money, they often fail to improve English proficiency. However, contemporary English study abroad learners' accounts and practices show that they are striving to improve their English and save as much money as possible because of their indebtedness to their parents.

4.2 Auditing in language teaching commodities

Another effect of parents’ economic capital on South Korean English study abroad is that, as Yunseok’s account already demonstrated, Korean students tend to associate their learning experiences with the issue of finances, and evaluate their studies using a cost-benefit analysis. They manifest the perception that the success or failure in improving their English proficiency during English study abroad is commensurate with the success or failure in their investment of material resources, especially their parents’ money. Shore and Wright (2015) define audit culture as “the widespread proliferation of these calculative rationalities of modern financial accounting and their effects on individuals and organizations” (p. 421). They point out that audit culture encourages “people to think of themselves as calculating, responsible, self-managing subjects” (p. 421).

Korean students’ audit culture in their language investment is mostly revealing in their use of vocabulary referring to or relating to money in evaluating their learning experiences. In evaluating classes at Lingua City, Korean students explicitly use a word, ton (money). For example, reflecting upon his learning trajectories, Heejun states:

Excerpt 2.7: Interview with Heejun (February 2013)
Heejun: When I’m thinking now about ESL courses, I’d think, “Ah, I regret that I took ESL courses.” They have some values. But what I’m basically thinking is “this is bullshit, I used money in vain” (hŏt-ton-ssŏtta). This is what I think. The classes tend to be a bit free (loose in class activity structure). ((pause)) To be honest, there was nothing to learn.

Heejun’s trajectory of class choice is comprised of a communicative English program, which he terms as ESL in this interview, a Cambridge English program, and a Translation/Interpretation program. Comparing these three programs, he says that taking
ESL courses seems to be a waste of money, even though he admits that they have certain benefits. He feels that he spent “money in vain,” especially because he thinks that ESL classes failed to help him improve English (“nothing to learn”). Associating his learning outcomes with money, perhaps, tuition, he uncovers that he perceives his choice of the communicative English program as excessive consumption.

Another example of Korean students’ use of monetary words for courses and programs is a Korean adjective, *akkapta*, which can be translated as “a waste.” In the following excerpt, while reflecting upon the courses that he took, Dongil verbalizes the word, *akkapta*:

Excerpt 2.8: Conversation with Dongil (September 2, 2013)
Dongil: The courses that I am taking these days are quite demanding. There are a lot of assignments, and I have to write two essays tonight. Perhaps because of these intensive courses, I get exhausted after the class. But I feel like I am learning something. When I took communicative English courses, I thought *akkapta* (it was a waste). That’s why people take communicative English courses only at the beginning of their English study abroad.

In this excerpt, Dongil is comparing the courses that he is now taking, and communicative English courses that he took in the early stage of his English study abroad. He argues that as current courses make him feel that he is learning effectively, he is satisfied even though he has to spend more time completing assignments after school. Using *akkapta*, Dongil expresses his opinion that he regrets taking communicative English courses, as he does not think that the courses helped with his English gains.

Further, in students’ conversations, the word, *akkapta*, appears in evaluating not only classes, but also their whole trajectories of English learning. For example, Dongil said that his English study abroad should not be “a waste” (Field notes, July 16, 2013) (see also Excerpt 2.5). Treating language learning experiences as a matter of success or failure in financial investment reveals that Korean students perceive their English educational commodities and services as being consumed with their material resources.

---

7 According to the Standard Korean Dictionary by the National Institute of Korean Language, the word, *akkapta*, is used to express feelings of regret and disappointment in a situation where one loses or wastes a valuable and precious object.
8 Correspondingly, the negative form, *anakkapta*, is also used, when study abroad students talk about a certain class or the educational investment.
This perception makes them see their failure in English improvement as equivalent to a waste of their tuition, time, or effort – all material resources in their educational investment.

Considering Korean students’ materialistic attitudes toward English education, the issue of educational choice during English study abroad is not merely a matter of effective language learning, but rather related to how to spend their material resources, especially parents’ money, as an educational investment. Subsequently, they are keen to evaluate and choose courses or experiences that they believe will be most helpful in improving their English or most suited to their needs and goals. Also, they continuously ask themselves what language skills they need to improve, what courses and programs they will take, what experiences they will have, and whether they need to change courses or navigate toward other language use experiences. In turn, they assess outcomes of their choices by reflecting upon how the language classes and experiences helped them to improve English. As Korean students recognize that a series of choices during their English study abroad is almost always associated with expenditures coming from their parents, they are led to behave as “reflective” and “rational” consumers who make “good” choices, and to “audit” the outcomes in the educational market (Chapter 5).

4.3 Setting aside cosmopolitan aspiration

Yarymowich (2004) points out that language study abroad is closely linked to the discourse of tourism. As evidenced in the terms, language tourism or language edutourism, language study abroad is a type of travel in which learners leave their life at home and experience exotic environments. This perspective underlines the fact that the aspiration for transnational education cannot be captured only by the skills training aspect. In language study abroad, while cultural experiences in a host country constitute essential elements in learning a language, the authenticity of the target culture is commodified and is consumed by study abroad learners particularly as part of cosmopolitan leisure activities.

Korean students’ motivation to leave the country is also to fulfill their global aspirations. For instance, when I asked my informants why they wanted to study abroad,
their first response was “to learn English.” However, following this self-explanatory response, they listed other reasons why they wanted to go abroad; for example, because of interest in Western or cosmopolitan culture and lifestyle, a desire to live overseas, and to escape from stressful life in South Korea – all concerned with aspects of tourism (cf. Bui, Wilkins, & Lee, 2014). However, there is a tension in Korean students’ cosmopolitan aspiration, as they are governed by the imperative that they should study hard, as explained above. The tension is explained in the following excerpt of the interview with Junghyuk:

Excerpt 2.9: Interview with Junghyuk (November 2013)
Junghyuk: To say in a word ((pause)) *top’i* (escape) ((laugh)) A shame to say it, *top’i*. ((pause)) Who would like to stay in Canada for ten months to escape ((laugh)) I am the only case. Yet it’s a bit *hyusik* (rest). In Chull: You can say it’s an escape. Many students say it’s an escape. Junghyuk: But to speak honestly, even though most of them don’t say it, more than half of the students consider it an escape. (...) But who on earth would like to escape while squandering such an amount of money? Honestly speaking.

In Chull: By the way, would you like to escape even though you spend money?
Junghyuk: Yes. Honestly, escaping is the primary reason. I don’t know which one is the most significant, but this is one of the reasons. Another reason is to be able to live abroad. To be honest, I can come because my parents afford it. Yeah, then, the first reason is that my parents can afford it (*yŏyuga itta*). The second reason is there would not be such an opportunity in the future. The third reason is when I am in the third year, I have to work as a member of my department council and do other extra work for the department. But I didn’t want to do it. I didn’t want to study, either. I heard that English study abroad would be helpful when I found a job. All things considered, I decided to come here. Anyhow, there was a necessity to learn English, too.

Junghyuk “honestly” shows me that his English study abroad is a sort of *top’i* (escape) from life in South Korea. However, with interrupting laughter, he adds that it is “a shame” to say it because of the length of an “escape” and the amount of money spent on such an “escape.” Soon he recasts English study abroad as “a rest,” arguably a term that mitigates the negative connotation of escape. Junghyuk confirms my remark that a majority of Korean students tend to think of English study abroad as an escape, but again
he does not change his opinion that formulating English study abroad as an escape or a rest is not acceptable given its considerable cost. When I ask him why he wanted to escape, he presents me with three reasons, even though he is weighing which one is most dominant: first, he hoped to experience overseas life; second, he expected that this overseas experience would not be possible in his later life; and third, he felt the pressure of studying and working in university life. He finally adds to these reasons of escape the necessities of English study abroad and the importance of English language proficiency in seeking future jobs.

Junghyuk’s explanation illuminates that the prospect of tourism is a component of South Korean students’ motivation for studying English abroad. The allure of what lies beyond South Korea and the chance to take a break from social pressures can attract students to go abroad in the name of English learning. Also, although Korean society has been globalizing and westernizing tremendously, South Korean youth still carry aspirations for living overseas, especially in the developed West. More interestingly, a considerable number of Koreans, including both young adults and their parents, think that unless they immigrate or move for business purposes, living overseas is possible only in one’s twenties as youth have not yet secured full-time employment. They believe that, once they start to work full-time, it is difficult for them to be able to live or travel abroad for a longer period; they have to work harder and longer to maintain employment, earn money, and support family – routines of common South Korean adults.

Korean undergraduates also desire to go abroad, as they feel that they need a break in their university life. They find that they are burned out due to continuing self-development projects; they try to attain a good GPA during semesters, and they strive to obtain qualifications (e.g., TOEIC scores, computer skills, major-related certificates) during vacations. When they find that they cannot continue with such a demanding life, they search for English study abroad opportunities as a means of a break. Furthermore, it is evident that when English study abroad learners return home, they need to engage again in the self-developing projects and even in job-seeking, which is stressful and exhausting. For this reason, some English study abroad students, particularly senior undergraduates, call their English study abroad majimak hyuga (the last vacation). These reasons illustrate that this overseas education is used as an excuse to carry out an escape.
However, it should be noted that, as Junghyuk mentioned, having such a break is made possible because students’ parents have yǒyu, or extra finance for this “travel” allowance. This fact leads English study abroad learners not to share their motivation of escape with others in public, or feel guilty doing so – using Junghyuk’s term, “a shame.” If they say it, they would suggest that they come to Canada only to kill time or spend money. This is a transgression of the moral that English study abroad learners should follow – studying hard to improve their English and saving money to relieve the financial burden on their family. As a result, Korean students’ aspirations for cosmopolitan cultural consumption remain in a liminal and ambiguous state, especially in the early period of their English study abroad.

5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the ways in which South Korean students access the English study abroad market and the effects that their access has on their ways of studying and life abroad. They realize the necessity of English study abroad to improve their English ability and to gain global experience, both of which are considered important qualifications for successful employment in South Korea’s competitive job markets. However, they also realize that overseas education is accessible only when their parents financially support them. As a result, during their English study abroad, they strive to improve English proficiency, save on living expenses, evaluate the effectiveness of their learning experience, and set their desire for a cosmopolitan lifestyle aside.

These processes of accessing the private education sector reveal that the transfer of parents’ economic capital to their children’s education is a key strategy for middle-class families to reproduce their class position in a neoliberal society (Katz, 2012; S. J. Park, 2013; Park & Abelmann, 2004). At the same time, the transfer of capital has contributed to causing indebtedness and thus creating an “audit culture” within youths’ learning and life (Shore & Wright, 2015; Strathern, 2000).

However, not all practices of English study abroad students are related to the imperatives of being hardworking, austere, and rational. They also have a desire for having fun, pursuing leisure activities, and enjoying their experience, although these
desires tend to be secondary. Thus, this chapter further asks us to examine not only how Korean learners adhere to and negotiate the normative principles of life and learning, but also how an alternative moral emerges and how they pursue it, as their life unfolds in Toronto. This will be discussed in the following chapters. Before answering these questions, we need to examine another discursive terrain that has profound consequences for English study abroad learners’ trajectories of transnational learning and life – that is, what kind of English they want to learn during their time abroad and how. The next chapter will examine the ideology of English affecting the decision-making process for English study abroad.
CHAPTER THREE
“ENLIVENING” ENGLISH: VALUING ENGLISH ABROAD

1 Introduction

Language is not defined simply by symbols and formulae as in math. It is what is “living and changing.” (Start to study English abroad in the U.S., p. 2)

When I turned the page of this guidebook, these two sentences caught my attention, telling me what language should be—“living and changing.” In fact, this is an ideology of language. These words, which seem to come from a textbook of linguistics, are stated right after the author explains why studying English abroad is necessary in contemporary South Korea, as discussed in Chapter 2. What comes next addresses what kind of English is valuable in today’s South Korean job market and how studying English abroad helps to improve it. In this chapter, I will examine these points, drawing on the framework of language ideology in linguistic anthropology (Agha, 2007; Blommaert, 2005; Jaffe, 2009; Kroskrity, 2000; Kroskrity et al., 1998; Silverstein, 1979, 2003). More specifically, I will explore what types of English both the English study abroad industry and learners expect this overseas experience to offer, how the types of English are ideologically constructed, and what consequences the ideological construction of English has for learners’ plans and management of studying English abroad.

For this analysis, I will use the metaphor of “dead” and “living” English. Following Duchêne and Heller (2012a), I will take this metaphor as keywords (Williams, 1985) for capturing ideological terrains and transformations of English in transnational practices. The analytic power of this metaphor lies in the oppositional relation that appears in the terms, “dead” and “living,” as it corresponds to the spatial contrast between home and abroad, which a transnational movement necessarily entails. Generally, “dead” English is represented as English for standardized English testing within South Korea, whereas “living” English is understood as English for oral communication abroad. However, as what a metaphor refers to is contextually and ethnographically conditioned (Gal, 2005), the metaphor of “dead” and “living” English needs to be analyzed rather than taken as having fixed meanings. Thus, in this chapter, I
will investigate why the two forms of English are perceived as “dead” and “living” by ethnographically analyzing documents of relevant discursive spaces (e.g., guidebooks, TOEIC Newsletter and advertising flyers in English education markets) and my informants’ accounts.

In the following sections, I will first introduce the metaphor of “dead” and “living” that is significantly employed in English study abroad market discourses. Next, I will focus on the ideology of “dead” English, which relies on the practice of learning English to obtain high scores in standardized English tests. As the score-oriented teaching and learning in test prep institutes leads to the standardization of linguistic knowledge and use, it falls short of the flexibility and variability in which oral communication competence is grounded. Following this, I will present an analysis of the ideology of “living” English. Through my participants’ discussions about oral English skills, I will show that it is not simply a synonym of Standard English, but rather an ideological construct that results from Korean students’ experiences of English learning and use. The ideological construction leads to a corresponding practice of pursuing an embodiment of authentic forms of English. I will then examine why “living” English is believed to be achievable only in Western English-speaking countries. Finally, I will conclude this chapter by revealing a remaining tension—the fact that the ideology of “living” English that Korean students try to embody is not always stable and promising in the South Korean English market.

2 “Dead” and “living” English: Language ideologies at home and abroad

The metaphor of “dead” and “living” English that is introduced in English study abroad guidebooks relates to the importance of one’s oral communicative competence in English in South Korea’s job market. In those books, it is argued that linguistic competence cannot be evaluated by means of applicants’ TOEIC scores, which has been extensively employed as an English assessment tool since the early nineties (Park, 2011). It is at this point that the ideology of “living” English acts on the English study abroad market aiming to attract prospective job seekers. The market emphasizes the importance
of “living” English by comparing oral skills in an actual communication setting to scores in standardized English tests:

The time was gone a long time ago when young job applicants competed for ‘TOEIC scores’ obtained by analyzing and memorizing the formats of questions. What is now necessary for us is not ‘the perfect TOEIC score’ anymore but rather ‘silchŏnhoehwa’ (practical conversation) competence in communicating with foreigners naturally. All know that to equip oneself with sarainnŭn chintcha hoehwa (living real conversation) competence as opposed to English ability for test purposes, one has to remove the idea of studying in front of a desk (stop studying with books) and instead move abroad to live immersed with English speaking foreigners even if it is only for a few months. Such an experience can help one practice English through the body (embodying English). Given this change in English competency requirements, one year of studying English abroad has become a mandatory part of university life among undergraduates in their twenties. (Start to study English abroad in the U.S., p. 14)

Since its widespread introduction into the recruitment process, TOEIC has dominated the market of English education for young adults. TOEIC scores have played a gatekeeper role in social mobility (e.g., employment and promotion) in the South Korean workplace. However, the author suggests that high TOEIC scores are not valuable anymore in today’s job market. He goes on to say that oral communicative competence has been gaining importance, although he terms it as silchŏnhoehwa (practical conversation).9

The opposition between TOEIC English and oral communicative competence looks ironic, given that TOEIC was introduced in South Korean corporations’ language policy as a tool of assessment of English communicative competence. At its initiation, TOEIC was believed to contribute to the transformation of English learning that was inclined to focus on reading, grammar and vocabulary, and to the improvement of South Koreans’ oral skills in English. However, according to the English study abroad market,

9 Essentially, the variation of the terms describing oral communicative competence of English in South Korea implies that the definition of oral communicative competence is semiotically indeterminate, needing more contextual information (cf. Park, 2010b). This is one reason why, in this chapter, I use the metaphor of “living,” even if it broadly refers to oral communicative competence. Although the issue of how to contextually define competence will be addressed in later sections of this chapter, it should be noted that oral communicative competence is viewed in opposition to English test scores, as this opposition frequently occurs in the ideological construction of living English.
it turns out that the policy failed. In the above excerpt, the author attributes a cause of this failure to the methods of English learning for TOEIC. He characterizes these methods as being test-centered (“analyzing”), rote (“memorizing”), and decontextualized (“studying in front of a desk”). By contrast, he suggests that learning English abroad will help the learners to engage in authentic and experiential language learning. The English study abroad market presupposes that the ineffective methods of learning TOEIC English should be replaced with alternative learning forms and spaces.

The necessity for an alternative learning space is strengthened by the discourse of immersion (Doerr, 2013, 2015). As Doerr points out, the belief that “through experiencing mundane daily life while immersed in the host society, students are expected to develop the sensibility, attitudes, skills and knowledge that make up (...) global competence” (Doerr, 2015, p.369), is prevalent in study abroad programs. The educational principle underlying this discourse is experiential learning, which is often regarded as being opposed to classroom learning at home. In a similar vein, studying abroad for the purpose of English acquisition is believed to be the most promising way to overcome decontextualized and test-centered English learning and to improve oral competence in real communication settings. In particular, when the discourse of immersion is linked with language learning, this discourse takes the shape of a Romantic perception of language and speech community, the search for authenticity, and the pursuit of native speakers. This ideological construction is clearly demonstrated in the following excerpt:

As language is a place that totally reflects a nation’s culture and its people’s lives, only those who feel and experience a nation’s culture and life can achieve a more natural and perfect command of the language. Thus, to learn English properly, you should leave for places where you can experience on an everyday basis the ideas and cultures of people who speak English as a mother tongue, thus learning English through one’s whole body. (Start to study English abroad in the U.S., p. 15)

10 Such understandings of language study abroad are also underlying assumptions in research in language learning in study abroad context. It distinguishes study abroad from classroom contexts, attempting to identify the effectiveness of the immersion on the acquisition of a certain type of linguistic competence, particularly pragmatic knowledge, and to seek implications for (language) study abroad programs, which are increasing in higher education in the era of globalization. See Block (2007) and Kinginger (2009) for reviews of the literature in the second language education field.
This author’s notion of language is based on linear relations between language and national culture as shown in the Romantic version of language ideologies that often appear during a period of nation-state building (Bauman & Briggs, 2003; Hobsbawm, 1992). Under this language ideology, learners of an additional language are required to immerse themselves in the culture where the language is used as a native language “to learn it properly.” It is also claimed that the pursuit of cultural and linguistic authenticity is the best way to learn a language. The author of this guidebook concludes by restating the necessity of studying English abroad:

“Dead” English is solidified in characters in books. To distinguish yourself from foregoing senior students who stick to and struggle with outdated and worn English, and if you want to have a command of “living” and fluent English, you should make the decision, without any hesitation, to study abroad right now. (Start to study English abroad in the U.S., p. 15)

This paragraph more starkly summarizes the metaphoric opposition between “dead” and “living” English. As the parallel between “dead” and “living” English corresponds to whether South Koreans go abroad or not, it suggests that those who do not study English abroad are represented as learners of an outdated type of English, which is English for TOEIC.

Such an analysis of the discourse in guidebooks shows that the ideologies of “dead” and “living” English are metalinguistic activities (Agha, 2007)—specifically moral statements regarding “good” and “bad” English—that justify an investment in studying English abroad. These metalinguistic acts lead to the construction of “living” English vis-à-vis “dead” English, and the opposition in the types of English produces other layers of cultural and educational oppositions with regards to English learning. “Dead” English implies a decontextualized learning for tests in the Korean domestic market, whereas “living” English stresses the importance of authenticity, human interaction, and embodiment in the global language education market. In the following sections, I will examine in more detail why South Korean learners perceive English for standardized tests as “dead,” how they construct the ideology of oral communicative competence in English as “living” English, and how their construction of the linguistic
opposition affects their ideas regarding life and learning while studying English abroad. This analysis will reveal the ways in which linguistic opposition is invariably associated with other sociocultural ideologies such as neoliberalism and post-colonialism, which affects English language learners’ practices and ideologies.

3 “Dead” English: English for standardized tests

In a linguistic market, the necessity for an alternative form of linguistic capital is initiated when an established form of capital is depreciated (Bourdieu, 1991; Park & Wee, 2012). The perception of English for TOEIC as being “dead” is grounded in both job seekers’ and hiring companies’ belief that TOEIC scores fail to represent a test taker's performance of oral communicative competence in English. While South Korean corporations, particularly leading global companies such as Samsung and Hyundai, are eager to hire employees with good communication skills in English, they often complain that applicants with high TOEIC scores are not good at communication in English (Park, 2011). Regarding this complaint, Samsung’s reform in its English language policy for recruitment in 2008 was marked as a crucial event. In 2007, the corporation announced that it was considering eliminating the submission of TOEIC scores and introducing OPIc, an English speaking test, into the recruitment process. It argued that this change was necessary for the reason that “there are a lot of employees who have high TOEIC scores but cannot speak a word of English when they actually meet foreigners” (The Korean Economic Daily, October 28, 2007). Because of Samsung’s position in the South Korean economy, the impact of their language policy change was significant. Following this case, other corporations, large and small, began to include tools for assessing oral skills in their recruitment process. Some required applicants to submit results of standardized English speaking tests such as OPIc or TOEIC Speaking, and other companies created additional steps to evaluate applicants’ oral skills such as English interviews or presentations.

There are various reasons for and approaches to the increasing depreciation of TOEIC in the job market. For example, Park (2011) sees it as part of a neoliberal language policy that imposes the burden of gaining a legitimate form of English on
individual learners while masking social and economic inequity allowing for different types of English capital. On the other hand, research in the language testing field frames this issue as the use of language tests in social domains. This research argues that tests are not used as intended due to users’ social and cultural contexts. For example, in spite of TOEIC’s perceived decreasing reliability and validity, corporations continue to use it due to budget restraints and the limited feasibility of implementing an alternative assessment. In particular, in EFL contexts, the reasons for the wide use of TOEIC for recruitment include: the relative reliability of the test designed and validated by a reliable testing institute; the objective comparison among applicants’ scores in recruitment; and the cost efficiency compared to an English test developed and administered by hiring companies or institutes. These motivations for the continued dependence on TOEIC are even more readily justified by the fact that Korea is a non-English speaking country where it is difficult to find trained native speakers who can create and evaluate independent English tests.

One of the alleged reasons for the inflation of TOEIC scores in South Korea’s job market is that to obtain higher scores, test takers employ test-taking skills that they learned in private test-prep institutes. Such a perception often leads test takers and corporations to characterize TOEIC English not as English competence but as what is called kisul (skills or tactics). For example, there is a TV commercial in South Korea for online TOEIC courses serviced by Yŏngdan’gi, starring a famous Korean singer, Sung Si-Kyung. Sung is known as a fluent English speaker, because he has a high TOEIC score, speaks English well in public, and graduated from Korea University, one of the elite universities in South Korea. He often interviews foreign celebrities who visit South Korea, and once led a Pan-Asian K-pop music show in English. During a close-up in the commercial, Sung Si-Kyung states: “We have studied English for twelve years, but there are some who still believe that TOEIC is for English learning. It is kisul.” Similarly, I often heard my informants describing their experiences of learning English in South Korea as learning for skills or scores purposes. For example, Dongil used the same words Sung Si-Kyung mentioned in the commercial: “English in South Korea was nothing but skills” (Interview, July 2013). He also commented about TOEIC, saying, “it’s just numbers!” (Conversation, July 2013).
The perception of TOEIC as just test-taking skills is related to the forms of English teaching and learning in test-prep institutes in the South Korean English education industry. Most of the Korean students I met in Toronto agreed that Korea was a much better place to study TOEIC than Toronto and rarely chose TOEIC courses that their overseas schools offered, because the South Korean test-prep institutes were better at teaching test-taking skills for higher scores. Such perceptions on studying TOEIC led me to conduct fieldwork, if not extensively, on TOEIC schools in South Korea.

During my fieldwork in South Korea in April 2014, I stopped by the main building of Hackers Institute in Gangnam, Seoul. Hackers is the most famous institute for teaching English for standardized tests (e.g., TOEIC, TOEFL, IELTS) in South Korea.11 When I visited the café located on the ground level of the building, I saw five young adult students studying with Hackers TOEIC workbooks, which are regarded as “a bible” for prospective TOEIC test takers. They have been listed as a bestseller for TOEIC workbooks since 2005. While at Hackers, I also collected their timetables for May, an information sheet on seven campus locations in Gangnam, which illustrates the large size of the institute, and a flyer for registration for May. The flyer reads:

Hackers, Number 1 foreign language institute.
Ranked by undergraduates as the top language institute able to help one graduate in the shortest period. (...) Your choice in institutes will affect the period you will have to study. Hackers promise to provide the shortest path to graduation from TOEIC.

In this flyer, Hackers Institute, which is selling the commodity of TOEIC English, promotes its marketability by highlighting that it will help students obtain the high scores in the “shortest” period. The flyer tries to offer credibility by showing that the school is ranked a top among multiple language institutes teaching TOEIC for the very reason. Moreover, the flyer uses the word, chorôphada (graduate), to refer to the notion that once test takers end up obtaining the TOEIC scores that they are aiming for, they will no longer have to study TOEIC anymore and can move on to achieving other

---

11 I also took TOEFL and GRE courses at the Hackers Institute, when I prepared for the language proficiency tests as part of my applications for doctoral programs in the U.S. and Canada.
accomplishments. This perception shows that a TOEIC score is an item to be achieved rather than a subject that they need to keep studying and using.

The marketing point of “a higher score in a shorter period” is commonly observed in many types and many sites of advertising connected to TOEIC commodities. For example, other flyers that I collected in other TOEIC preparation institutes (e.g., Pagoda, YBM Sisa) show a similar discourse:

• It is the TOEIC course that the Gangnam branch of YBM language institute recommends! Finish TOEIC in two months.
• From basic to intermediate, plus practical! Complete TOEIC in a short time.
• Seven smart solutions suggested only by myŏngp’um (luxurious) TOEIC (the name of the course) to finish TOEIC in one month.

Further, the statement that high TOEIC scores will be acquired in a short period indicates that there must be “special” ways of teaching and learning—that is, the institute’s specialty. Their know-how is the key to the institute forming a reputation among students. Thus, almost all of the flyers that I collected during fieldwork in South Korea emphasize how instructors strategically teach each part of TOEIC. The following visual chart, which is taken from a flyer of another language school in Gangnam and simplified for clarity, illustrates the strategic outline of instruction, called “four steps for the achievement of one’s TOEIC goal”:

![Figure 3.1 Strategic Outline of TOEIC Instruction](image-url)
This chart gives an overview of what to study and how to study it in order to obtain a high score within a short time. In “step 1,” prospective test takers should learn building blocks of English, such as basic grammar and vocabulary. Then, in “step 2,” they should be familiar with test item types in each part of TOEIC by analyzing and solving them. The term, “analysis,” means that instructors at the institute show why a test question is designed in such way and how it should be approached to get the correct answer. These two steps are considered basic in English learning for TOEIC. However, students need to know and study additional know-how for higher scores: that is, kisul, for trending and difficult items. In fact, these skills can make an instructor famous within the TOEIC education market. One is able to know which item is new or tricky as long as he or she keeps taking actual TOEIC tests. Job seeking adult students have difficulty attaining such awareness, as they usually want to obtain a certain score within a couple of test-taking trials. Thus, instructors, instead of them, keep taking TOEIC tests to figure out the trend and deliver it to students in their classes. For this reason, some of the instructors highlight that they take TOEIC every month to acquire up-to-date knowledge and have perfect scores. Also, as demonstrated in the bottom row in Figure 3.1, students are required to practice English knowledge and know-how that the instructors tailor to TOEIC repetitively and intensively.

The analysis of TOEIC flyers and advertisements leads us to examine what kinds of English knowledge and test-taking tactics are integrated into TOEIC teaching and learning. To answer this question, I decided to analyze Hackers TOEIC workbooks. To illustrate, I took the Part 1 of TOEIC as an example. The direction for test takers reads: “For each question in this part, you will hear four statements about a picture in your test book. When you hear the statements, you must select the one statement that best describes what you see in the picture. Next find the number of the question on your answer sheet and mark your answer. The statement will not be printed in your test book and will be spoken only one time” (Educational Testing Service, 2012). I configured the analysis, as seen in Figure 3.2, which shows how TOEIC learning is structured and developed in the Hackers TOEIC workbook. Furthermore, it demonstrates how it is scripted, codified and standardized as a normalized way of learning English.
Figure 3.2 Flow of Scripted Learning for TOEIC

Figure 3.2 indicates two components of learning that are required to succeed in solving questions in the Part 1 of TOEIC: know-how and English knowledge. First, test takers should know the architecture of items that reflects recent trends in test items. In the above example, they should be aware that some of the pictures in Part 1 involve humans who are doing an action or are in a particular situation as seen in the flow of the straight line. Then, the student is told to figure out the number of humans in the picture. Such an analysis of these TOEIC questions reveals not only the details of analysis but also the involvement of the cognitive skills used. The test-taking skills are not simple tips for test takers but rather strategies that require analytical abilities to guide test takers to focus on a certain part of information in the test. Second, this type of analysis based on cognition is linked to English linguistic knowledge. For example, the fact that a person in the picture is often doing an action leads to the learning of relevant sentence structures, action verbs and expressions, as seen in the dotted arrow lines. The semantic element of
[+animate, -animate] expands to relevant learning contents such as present progressive form. Finally, students become accustomed to both linguistic and non-linguistic types of knowledge and to solidify the link between the two sets of knowledge through the repeated practice of questions presented at each point of instruction.

The analysis of a section of a TOEIC workbook demonstrates that English learning for TOEIC is scripted in ways that allow students to obtain high TOEIC scores when they follow suggested strategies and knowledge, both linguistic and non-linguistic. These suggestions are based on meticulous and detailed analysis of test types and strategic linking of the know-how to functions of grammar, vocabulary, and usage. In fact, this is why a number of South Korean students enter private test preparation markets; they believe that the scripted learning of English is an efficient way to acquire a higher score in a shorter period.

The use of script in the workplace and training has been studied in sociolinguistics, especially on language practices in call centers (e.g., Cameron, 2000). Research on scripts in call centres and what I call scripted learning in the educational sites have a similar implication, in that both of them pursue efficiency in their own contexts; scripts in call centers are used for employers to make profits by increasing workers’ productivity, whereas South Korean students consume scripted learning to improve their employability rapidly. The scripts in call centres are meant to control workers’ verbal interactions and ultimately quality service, whereas the learning scripts for standardized tests are to control learning contents, methods, strategies, and ultimately test takers’ performance in actual test settings (Rydell, 2015). Language industries such as call center businesses and English language teaching schools also play a major role in producing scripts of language use and training. Furthermore, the creation of scripts of language learning and use often works with the use of technology. In call centers, the development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has facilitated the standardization of language use and training. In English test-prep industries, technology makes it possible to upload methods for scripted learning on online platforms. Yŏngdan’gi, the institute mentioned above, used to offer only online courses, and the Hackers institute provides online learning as another venue for their profits.
Given the ways of learning English for TOEIC, the linguistic knowledge that test takers acquire during their study for TOEIC is not fully intended for communication but for high scores on tests. Although Korean students believe that learning for TOEIC is also one type of English learning, they perceive TOEIC English as “dead” because it is customized not to oral communication in English but to the solution of TOEIC test items.

Indeed, the corporations attempting to evaluate applicants’ oral skills in English through standardized speaking tests such as TOEIC Speaking and OPIc have brought up the same issues as TOEIC—codification and scripting of English learning for tests. Since Samsung announced the introduction of OPIc, English test-prep industries rapidly adapted to the change. They not only published workbooks and opened new courses, but also, as has been done in TOEIC, analyzed test items and formulated strategies. I was able to recognize the attempts to develop scripted learning for English speaking tests when I attended a free public promotional workshop on TOEIC Speaking and OPIc in April 2014. The workshop was organized by a large test-prep institute and was held in a large classroom at its Gangnam campus. Two instructors, one for TOEIC Speaking and the other for OPIc, presented the structures of the tests and outlined basic strategies of studying for them. The instructors concluded their presentations by affirming that students could learn more about what and how to study in their classes, and they promised to help students to reach the level that they aimed for. What the instructors hinted at here was another way of scripted learning; the analysis of item types and recent questions and the suggestion of the main points for good scores. Compared with TOEIC teaching, the key know-how for standardized speaking tests was to offer actual script templates and patterned answers applicable to any situation encountered in test questions—one instructor called them mannǔng (all-round) scripts (Field note, April 20, 2014).

Just as scripted learning for TOEIC is depreciating its validity in communication competence, so is scripted learning for standardized speaking tests. My informants often revealed that the oral communicative competence that they acquired in Toronto could not be reduced to the scores of English-speaking tests (Jang, 2015). They believed that oral communication skills should not be assessed by standardized tests, as the tests fabricate
communication settings and facilitate standardized forms of English use as a consequence of scripted learning in test prep institutes (cf. Rydell, 2015).

4 “Living” English: English for oral communication

As studying English abroad is an educational investment into oral communication skills, it is important for Korean students to define and value “living” English. In fact, their construction of oral communication skills, or “living” English, is grounded not in what academic scholars have defined as communicative competence (e.g., Canale & Swain, 1980; Council of Europe, 2001; Hymes, 1972), but rather in their ideas and experiences of English learning and English communicative situations. It indicates that the work of defining “living” English is evaluative, ideological and selective (Blommaert & Varis, 2013; Dong, 2009; Kataoka, Ikeda, and Besnier, 2013), while entailing metalinguistic activities to justify their stance on “living” English (Agha, 2007; Jaffe, 2009). As Kataoka et al. (2013) argue, the construction of communicative competence is “the product of moment-by-moment negotiations within the act of communication and large-scale social structures” (p. 349).

In Korean students’ talks on English communicative competence, or “metacommunicative acts” (Briggs, 1986), what count are their narrations on misunderstandings, communication breakdowns, and communicative difficulties that they perceived or experienced before or even during English study abroad. Such talks naturally lead to discussions of the linguistic and cognitive components that impede or facilitate successful communication in English. Thus, the linguistic, cultural, or even cognitive components constitute the ideological definition of “living” English.

Like other Korean students, Geonyoung, a fourth-year female student at a private university in Seoul, was similarly motivated to study English abroad—to improve her English speaking. She first studied English in the Philippines for three months but decided to come to Toronto after having found that her English proficiency dramatically decreased when she returned to South Korea. She evaluated her English fluency before studying abroad as a shame:
Excerpt 3.1: Interview with Geonyoung (July 2013)
Geonyoung: Before I went abroad, a foreigner asked me for directions. I said some English words. But when I reflected on what I said later, I thought, why could I not have said it in a better way. I did not have any experience talking to a foreigner in English.
In Chull: In better ways?
Geonyoung: I mean, I could have said it with sŏbŭjekt ’ŭ (subject) and pŏlbŭ (verb). That’s not what I did. I just said “uh,” as Koreans usually speak English. I thought “Why is my English like this?” even though I had learned English for more than a decade.
In Chull: Sometimes, I do the same time.
In Chull: I know.
Geonyoung: The person asking for directions said that I could speak English. But I thought that it would be better to say it in better ways and I also wondered why I spoke that way even though I was not an idiot.

Before studying English abroad in the Philippines and Toronto, Geonyoung had few experiences of communicating with a foreigner in English. She said that, when she met an English speaker who asked her for directions, she spoke English in fragmented ways without any grammatically appropriate sentence structure. Although it seems that she gave the speaker the right directions in English, she was disappointed in her way of speaking. Further, she characterizes the way she spoke as a performance typical of less proficient Korean English speakers, who use fragmented and unstructured English.

Geonyoung’s narrative about communicative difficulties in English moved on to her experience in Canada.

Excerpt 3.2: Interview with Geonyoung (July 2013)
Geonyoung: Before studying English abroad, I was like that. But even now, when I speak, some people do not understand me. That’s because of my pronunciation.
In Chull: Ah, how do you deal with such situations?
Geonyoung: I repeat it. If it looks like someone really doesn’t understand, I spell it. But my pronunciation is like that. It’s not good. There are some Korean students who mimic native English speakers’ pronunciation. Bill (Heajin’s English name) is one of them. So I asked how he learned English pronunciations, and he said, “I just mimic them (native English speakers)” (...) I even took a pronunciation course, but it was hard to follow because there are no /r/ or /l/ sounds in Korean. But I have to practice them.
In general, Geonyoung feels that her speaking is improving. However, she still confronts communication breakdowns when she talks to English speakers in Toronto. She attributes the interactional difficulty to her bad pronunciation, assuming that her English pronunciation is not native-like. Her norm of English pronunciation relies on English native speakers as shown in her talk about another Korean student, Bill. Geonyoung thinks of Bill as having good English pronunciation because he practices it by mimicking “them”—native English speakers (NES). Further, she thinks that the cause of her “bad” pronunciation is her first language, Korean, because the Korean language does not have, for example, /r/ or /l/, in its sound system. She perceives the cross-linguistic difference as an impediment to passing as a native speaker, and at the same time, as a reason that Koreans, including her, should continue to focus on studying English pronunciations.

Geonyoung’s accounts and experiences show several sets of the metalinguistic awareness: Koreans are not fluent English speakers, their accents are problematic, and they need to practice native English. Such ideas of Korean English speakers and their English also frequently appeared in conversations about the effects of studying English abroad on English communicative competence. In the beginning of October 2013, Jungmin and Dongil talked about their studying English abroad on the rooftop garden of the Toronto New City Hall. Jungmin was about to move to Vancouver to continue his English study, whereas Dongil would return to Korea soon. As both of them were in the last period of their English study abroad in Toronto, their conversation topic was channeled to linguistic gains from their overseas experiences. In the following conversation, Jungmin spoke most of the time, while Dongil and I listened to what he was saying. Like Geonyoung, Jungmin first brought up the issue of communicative difficulties in English as a background for his need to study English abroad:

Excerpt 3.3: Conversation between Jungmin and Dongil (October 2013)
Jungmin: On the flight to Toronto, I asked a flight attendant for coke, but she gave me coffee. I really wanted to drink cold coke, but then had to drink hot coffee ((laugh)). On the first day of school, it took more than one hour to get to my homestay from Eglinton West subway station. I had no idea how to take a bus and where I was headed. So I asked for directions in ttŏttimttŏđŭm (stumbling) English. Fortunately, a foreign woman kindly gave me the directions. It was the moment that I made a resolution that I should study English really hard.
Jungmin first shares with us his awkward and hilarious experience of the communication between him and a flight attendant. Even though he intended to say the word, “coke,” the flight attendant mistook it as the word, “coffee.” Assuming that this misunderstanding took place due to his English pronunciation (“coke” and “coffee”), he shows how poor his English skills were when he began his English studies in Toronto. Following this episode, Jungmin brings up another story of communicative difficulty that he experienced on the first day in Toronto. As he was not familiar with Toronto’s public transportation system, he was lost at a subway station. Although he asked a passerby for directions and finally got to his destination, he emphasizes how unnaturally he spoke to the woman who helped him. Jungmin attributes the success in his communication not to his English ability but to the interlocutor’s kindness and willingness to communicate.

Following these two episodes, Dongil asked Jungmin whether their English had improved when compared to the beginning of their English study abroad. In response, Jungmin talked about what he had been learning in Toronto:

Excerpt 3.4: Conversation between Jungmin and Dongil (October 2013)
Jungmin: (Looking at Dongil) In a pronunciation course, I got a lot of feedback on my pronunciation. The teacher in the class pointed at me and said, “hey, Carlos (Jungmin’s English nickname12), as you’re not good at this pronunciation, try it.” At first, I thought, “why me again,” but as the teacher kept pointing at my pronunciations, I got more conscious about them, in particular, /l/, /θ/, and /ʃ/, all that we (Koreans) have difficulty with. I was wondering if native speakers pronounced these sounds properly, so I looked at how teachers did it. All of them did it properly. I have never seen a case when their tongues don’t go ahead of their teeth when “the” is spoken. (...) The way of voicing is also different from what we do. The voice comes from much below. And they speak with their mouth wider and in louder tones. What the teacher used as an example is “apple.” It is not [ɛpəl] (lax). It’s [æpəl] (tense).

Jungmin’s description shows how studying English abroad has contributed to his English pronunciation. Furthermore, the effects are not limited to the ways of pronunciation; studying English abroad has also enabled him to have an awareness of the

12 The name, Carlos, is Spanish or Latin American origin, but Jungmin used it as his English nickname. He picked up this name, as Carlos was one of his favorite MLB players.
importance of proper pronunciation. In this talk, by distinguishing himself from teachers in the school, Jungmin sets up a norm of English pronunciations in reference to his teachers’ native pronunciations. Additionally, through the teacher’s feedback in the pronunciation class, he came to try to correct his pronunciation. Further, the perception of teachers’ English pronunciations as native and standard was reinforced through his observations on their pronunciation of /th/ in the word, “the.” Jungmin, or possibly other Koreans alike, believed that the pronunciation of “the,” seen as a trivial part in a spoken phrase, could be dropped or not said properly, but Jungmin confirmed that teachers always used it correctly. Then, the topic of Jungmin’s talk moves from consonants to vowels and voicing. Also, like Geonyoung, Jungmin frames the difficulty with the English accent as a result of the way the Korean language is spoken. He argues that consonants such as /ʃ/, /θ/ and /l/ need more practice because these sounds do not exist in Korean. This is also the case with tense/lax in vowels because this concept plays a less significant role in intelligibility in the Korean vowel system.

Geonyoung’s and Jungmin’s accounts show that Korean students assume that accents are an important linguistic element in communication (Lippi-Green, 2012; Park, 2009a, 2009b). However, English study abroad students also reveal that the knowledge of native speakers’ accents and the correction of non-native accents are not sufficient to make communication in English successful—rather, it should be habitus. In other words, they believe that the use of native-like accents should be spontaneous and unconscious in an actual communication situation. This conversation between Dongil and Insung shows the habitual aspect of “good” communicative competence:

Excerpt 3.5: Talk between Dongil and Insung (July 2013)
Dongil: Still, I don't have the confidence to speak English.
In Chull: Why not? You guys speak very well. Remind yourself of your first day in Toronto.
Dongil: Of course. I can speak better. But still, until now, I cannot express fluently=
Insung: =Yeah.
Dongil: If I speak something, it's very hard [ to say ] in the same sentence as what I think in Korean.
Insung: [ Yeah ]
In Chull: Me too, it’s really hard. It's not my first language.
Dongil: When I speak English, I can't even consider linking or pronunciation, as I have to find appropriate words. Now, I have only one session. Goddamn.

This conversation took place when Insung was about to return to South Korea and Dongil had one session left although he would later extend his stay in Toronto. Even though they have been studying English for more than six months in a study abroad context, they still feel that they have little confidence in speaking English. Dongil says that he has difficulty with English speaking because he cannot spontaneously put what he is thinking into English words. I reply to his opinion, assuming that this problem is common among second language speakers (“It’s not my first language”). However, what Dongil says following that point shows that in his view, the difficulty does not only come from the semantic differences between the two languages, but it also stems from a load of cognitive resources. In other words, Dongil thinks that he cannot speak English “fluently” because he is simultaneously dealing with cognitively loaded components. When he speaks English, he tends to come up with Korean words and then find their English counterparts. As a result, he cannot fully consider the principles of English pronunciations such as linking, which, he believes, affect an interlocutor’s understanding of his English. For Dongil and Insung, oral communication in English is a cognitively demanding task that requires them to employ a series of linguistic and paralinguistic features. Thus, they believe that for successful oral communication, some linguistic and cognitive performances should be automatized without any interference from metalinguistic awareness (e.g., “I have to touch my lower lip when I pronounce /f/”) or mental translations in Korean.

My informants’ metalinguistic discussions so far reveal two significant elements in constructing their conception of communicative English: native speaker’s English and embodiment. As seen in their evaluation of native English speaker’s accents, South Korean students take native speaker’s English as a reference point for a desired type of English. However, their ultimate goal is not merely to have linguistic knowledge or awareness of native speaker’s English, but rather to embody it. They want to speak English naturally and unconsciously. As Bourdieu (1991) points out, the legitimacy of a possessor’s valuable linguistic capital comes from his or her natural and unconscious
use—that is, linguistic *habitus*. Thus, Korean students conclude that they need to invest their money, time, and efforts more intensively and longitudinally in order to embody native speaker’s English. Learning English abroad is based on their desire for linguistic habitus.

My informants’ accounts also expose that they perceive the cross-linguistic influence of the Korean language as an impediment to the embodiment of speaking English like a native speaker. They believe that the Korean language often produces English with Korean accents and Koreanized English expressions, or “Konglish.” Furthermore, their habitus of *han’gôro saenggakhagi* (thinking in Korean) causes awkward and frequent pauses, fragmented and unnatural flow, and slow rates in verbal interaction in English. Korean students perceive such communicative performances as a sign of a speakers’ low English proficiency. Thus, they invariably strive to eliminate or minimize the effects of their Korean linguistic habitus. In this sense, the process of embodiment of native speaker’s English necessarily involves the process of *disembodiment of interference from the Korean language*.

5 Embodying English: Making spatial distinctions

5.1 South Korea as an illegitimate learning space

When I did fieldwork in Gangnam, I discovered another type of flyers that advertised English-speaking courses in language institutes. What stood out to me were programs that stressed their efficiency by saying that they could help students improve to a certain level of oral English proficiency without studying English abroad. More notable was the way in which such speaking courses promoted oral English skills; they mobilized the specific ideological elements of “living” English. For example, one flyer said:

---

13 A similar perception is observed in Park's (2013) analysis of metalinguistic acts of Korean employees in a multinational corporation in Singapore. They tend to attribute their lack of English proficiency to their habit of thinking in Korean while speaking English. Their less spontaneous response and slow rate of English speaking as a consequence of *han’gôro saenggakhagi*, make Korean employees position themselves as less proficient English speakers and provoke linguistic anxiety in their workplace.
Restart your English with *chintcha* (real) English speaking!

- Develop your American pronunciation
- Catch intonations and stress patterns
- Apply the KISS Principle (Keep It Simple and Short)
  Native speakers never speak with difficult grammar and vocabulary!
- Train yourself to think in English ways (Free of translation)
- Unlimited repetition
  Your body will remember!

This flyer suggests that to learn “real” English, students should be trained in native speaking accents (“American tongue” and “intonations and stress patterns”) and usage (grammar, vocabulary and the “KISS principle”). Furthermore, their English will become embodied (“thinking in English ways” and “your body will remember”) through a number of practices (“unlimited repetition”). The flyer implies that English education in South Korea can promise to help students embody native speaker’s English.

However, as Park (2010b) showed, the semiotic construction of “good” English in South Korea does not remain only within a linguistic aspect. Rather, it is linked to what he terms *spatiotemporal extension*—an interdiscursive process that links “geographically and temporally distant communicative events with the present, thus setting up the relevance of the English language within a local social context, and justifying the value of the featured learner’s English” (p. 198). Park argues that learners’ English proficiency is bestowed with authority when it is presupposed that the English that they learn is authentic to native speakers and that the learning space is their language community.

In fact, the flyer that I used as an example above exploits the semiotic resources of legitimate English speaking spaces and English speakers. The persuasive force of the flyer leading to the belief that these programs will help to embody native English, originates from the characters of the instructors. According to the instructors’ profiles, they are Korean-English bilinguals who lived in the U.S. In many cases, language schools in South Korea use their teachers’ nativeness of the English language and culture to authenticate their programs for oral communications. They idealize classes as spaces where students can learn authentic English that bilingual teachers offer, although the ways of learning are not experiential or first hand.

Essentially, the ways the English study abroad market idealizes the spaces of English learning are straightforward. It sets up a clear boundary between home and
abroad, while erasing linguistic and cultural diversity that would weaken the authenticity of space. It also replaces the diversity with opportunities for cosmopolitan experiences and consumption. However, the ways my informants authenticated English speaking countries were more complex, as their imaginations of the learning spaces were intersected with their past experiences of English learning and use. They were convinced that they could not acquire English habitus within Korea, even though the country’s language education industry claimed promising learning opportunities.

In every first ethnographic interview with my participants, I asked them what brought them to Toronto. Although this question introduced different themes in their answers, one of the common responses was that they could not study English properly in South Korea. As discussed above, they characterized language learning in South Korea as learning for standardized English test scores. Moreover, Geonyoung said that she could not find time to study oral English in Korea, because she had to focus on studying for her major courses during her university’s semesters. If extra time was allowed, she volunteered and went out with her boyfriend (Interview, July 2013). When I later met my informants in South Korea, their perception of South Korea as a “bad” English learning space had become reinforced. Most said that they just wanted to maintain, if not increase, their current level of English proficiency. Above all, they complained that as English was not used in everyday communication, they had fewer opportunities to practice English.

However, students’ experiences of using English in South Korea show that such negative evaluations of South Korea as an English learning place are mediated by micro-social interactions as well. Primarily, they are unwilling to speak English in South Korea as they are concerned about other Koreans’ gaze. In a speech community where English does not have a significant pragmatic function in everyday conversations, speaking English, even if an utterance is short, is perceived as a salient act, particularly when there are only Korean speakers present in the communication situation. Furthermore, when English is used, a co-present Korean hearer often verbally evaluates his or her Korean interlocutor’s English, especially their accent (Park, 2009b). My informants’ concern about other Koreans’ evaluations of their English in South Korea appears in the following conversation between Dongil and Insung:
Excerpt 3.6: Conversation between Dongil and Insung (July 2013)

Dongil: When I come back to Korea, what I am most worried about is what if I would use English words in the course of speaking Korean. While I am saying, I just put “you know,” “Can I” or “I mean,” or say, “I am sorry” to a person behind me. If I do like this, Koreans would say “who is this asshole?”

Insung: If we speak English very well, it won’t matter. If English is not good, this would look like real bullshit to them. In case that I am back to Korea and I try to order a bottle of soju (Korean alcohol), I have to pronounce “fresh.” If I pronounce it as [frɛʃ] (labiodental and retroflex), they would say to me, “chaesuŏpnŭn saekki” (an asshole) and “hyŏga kko'yŏta” (your tongue is twisted) because of studying English abroad.

This conversation happened when they went to Canada’s Wonderland with their Japanese classmates (I joined the excursion). While waiting for a bus to come, in Yorkdale’s GO bus terminal, Dongil and Insung talked with each other in Korean, while their Japanese friends were busy elsewhere. In this conversation, they shared their concern about using English when they returned to South Korea. Dongil first brings up a hypothetical situation where he might unconsciously use English words such as fillers (e.g., “you know” or “I mean”) and frequently used expressions (e.g., “Can I…” or “I’m sorry”). He supposes that his friends' response would be to humiliate him by calling him an “asshole.” Following Dongil’s humorous episode, Insung adds that, if Dongil’s English is excellent, the humiliating response would not be made. In other words, the performance becomes subject to the negative evaluation when the performer is not recognized as a sufficiently good speaker of English. Insung then talks about another hypothetical situation that he might be confronted with on his return to South Korea, which could happen when he places an order for soju from a brand named Ch’amisul Fresh. What makes this act of ordering soju salient lies in the pronunciation of the word, “fresh”—it has /ʃ/ and /tʃ/, consonants whose ways of articulation—labiodental and retroflex—do not exist in the Korean phonetic system. As most of Koreans pronounce it as [huleʃ], the act of [frɛʃ] would imply that he imitates NES accents and further, that he is showing off his experience learning English overseas. Like Dongil’s case, Insung imagines that he would be humiliated and teased by his friends.

Interestingly, these hypothetical situations actually happened to Junghyuk. In April 2014, I met him at his university located in the Southern part of Korea. We took a
taxi to go to a famous restaurant in the city and in the taxi we caught up with how things had been since he left Toronto. All of sudden, he said that his English was getting bad. He continued to say that, on his return, he attempted to maintain English pronunciations that he had tried to embody. However, he often confronted his friends’ negative responses. Junghyuk took the word, “Facebook,” as an example. When he said the word with the upper teeth touching the lower lip, his friends sarcastically asked: “have you been shot with yangppong (the Western drug) during study abroad?” In the end, Junghyuk stopped pronouncing it as a labiodental.

The sedimentation of such negative responses to using English words among Koreans has a consequence for the perception of Korea as an English learning space. It leads to the belief that South Koreans should go to particular spaces to learn and practice English, where the extensive use of English is allowed, and other Koreans’ evaluation is void or minimized. The spaces accessible to them are English classrooms or English-only zones within the territory of Korea; otherwise, they should go abroad to English-speaking countries.

5.2 Western English speaking countries as legitimate learning spaces

In the English study abroad market, all English-speaking destinations are not considered equally valuable. Just as the global markets of English are stratified in terms of its value (Park & Wee, 2012; Tupas & Salonga, 2016), so is the valuation of English learning spaces. In the South Korean English study abroad context, the stratification is clearly manifested in the case of studying English abroad in the Philippines. The Philippines is emerging as a destination of English study abroad for its geographical proximity and budgetary advantage. During my fieldwork, I recognized this trend as I met many Korean students who studied English in the Philippines prior to coming to Toronto. Geonyoung was one of them. In an interview with her, I asked why she did not continue to study in the Philippines. She responded:

Excerpt 3.7: Interview with Geonyoung (July 2013)
Geonyoung: There are limitations. When it was the second month, I felt my English was improving. I could speak English, and I could order food. I
could get something done, whatever, but, pronunciation and grammar are, a little, at least, they use English, but only educated people speak English well. Outside the school, people, just, do not have a smooth English. They can speak English, though. But I had the idea that here (in Toronto) the environment for English learning would be better.

Geonyoung admits that studying English in the Philippines helped her to improve oral proficiency to a level that she could place an order in English. However, the limitation that she faced came from the difference in Filipino English outside of her school. Their English sounded “non-native-like” and not “fluent” (not “smooth”) to her; in particular, their pronunciation and grammar were problematic.

The awareness that Filipino English is non-standard and non-native-like appears within the curricula themselves, which highlight one-to-one or small-group classes. The lower wages of English teachers make this implementation possible. Korean students are satisfied that they can have a sufficient number of opportunities to communicate with teachers in English. Moreover, as a type of boarding school, language schools in the Philippines restrict their students to going outside during weekdays and encourage them to study English in the schools’ libraries or dormitories. This measure is the opposite to studying English abroad in Western English-speaking countries, where after-school activities are encouraged. The strict separation between the inside and the outside of language schools in the Philippines reflects the ways in which South Koreans perceive the Philippines as an English learning space; the society is not Western and is less developed, and its English is not qualified. As a result, the schools endeavor to confine the opportunities of English learning to classroom settings where Filipino/a teachers with high English proficiency are willing to communicate with students. However, Korean students do not think of them as fully native speakers as well. As Insung mentioned: “It was great to have a one-to-one class, but it seems that their English expressions are not rich. They (Filipino/a teachers) seem to have a set of expressions that they teach. They also have an issue with pronunciations. They taught some expressions that are not used here (in Toronto)” (Field note, June 10, 2013).

Korean learners think that English speaking countries in the outer circle, such as the Philippines, grant a sufficient number of opportunities for learning and using English but that their English is not fully qualified—it is not on the NES norm, in particular, their
accents and their usage. In relation to the position of the Philippines in the global English education market, they suppose that, in Western English-speaking countries, they can learn native speakers’ English and use it as much as they can embody.

Essentially, Korean students’ view of Western English-speaking countries as the best English learning space is based on the ideological link that Western English-speaking countries are home to native English-speaking people. Considering legitimacy and authority of NES in the TESOL market, it cannot be dismissed that ESL/EFL learners as language consumers prefer NES teachers or interlocutors as ideal language providers. During my fieldwork, I often faced the native speakerism (Holliday, 2006) of my informants. However, what I saw as a significant characteristic in their orientation toward NES was a particular type of relationship that South Korean learners preferred to build with native English speakers—that is, ch’in’gu, or friend. For example, most of the guidebooks advise readers to make an NES “friend” to learn the language and culture of native speakers. They give tips such as participation in volunteer work, language exchange, or hobby clubs, assuming that friendships are hard to make without proactive efforts in a study abroad environment where students’ social networks are not established.

All of my informants said to me that they had the goal of making an NES friend when they began their English study abroad. However, most of them, in particular, male students, failed (Chapter 4). Among them, Taehwan was the student who tried his best to make a native friend until he returned to Korea. He said:

Excerpt 3.8: Interview with Taehwan (December 2013)
Taehwan: Before I came here, my friends told me a lot that I must not meet Koreans. They said, “If you meet them and speak in English, you will be told that you’re an asshole. As much as you can, you should not meet Koreans. The way to success in studying English abroad is to meet Canadian friends.” (…) I think that the successful students employ different methods to hang out with Canadians, for example, to work out together, and momūro pujithimyōnsō (“crash with each others’ bodies”; hang out together), to finally master English.

The advice that his friends, who had already had the experience of studying English abroad, gave Taehwan before his departure, was two-fold. One was not to build friendships with Koreans because Taehwan would not be allowed to speak English with
them. They reasoned that the use of English among Koreans even in a study abroad context would provoke humiliation against Taehwan. Instead, they suggested that Taehwan should try to make a Canadian friend. Resonating with their suggestions, Taehwan also claims that the best way to “master English” is to create personal relationships with native speakers by hanging out or working out with them. He believes that, for this goal to work, he need to seek out native speakers who can be friends on a daily basis. To make a native English-speaking ch‘in‘gu, Taehwan actually navigated various sites and communities. For example, he bought a basketball and went to a community center to play basketball with locals, and he applied for volunteer work such as at the Toronto Christmas Market in the Distillery Distinct.

The “native speaker effect” (Doerr, 2009) on language learners comes from the latter’s belief that the former’s linguistic authenticity will serve as valuable resources for their language learning. What friendship additionally implies is a way of learning; language learning through continued immersion in a native speaker’s everyday life. Although Sangmoo’s case below is not directly related to friendships with native speakers, it shows what sorts of benefits intimate relationships and everyday communication experiences bring to South Korean learners. Sangmoo was a fourth-year male student of business administration in a Korean national university. In an interview in August 2013, he told me about the trajectory of his English study abroad. He said that what was most beneficial among his various experiences during his time in Canada was to have a trip to his aunt’s home in the U.S. for three weeks. His aunt migrated to the U.S. from Korea after her marriage with a White American nearly three decades ago. She had one daughter who did not live with her as she was working as a medical doctor in the U.S. Army. According to Sangmoo, his aunt was bilingual, speaking Korean/English, and her husband and daughter spoke English but not Korean. When Sangmoo arrived at his aunt’s place, she suggested that they communicate with each other in English at least in the afternoon and evening on the grounds that Sangmoo came to North America to learn English. He also had to communicate with her husband in English after he returned from work in the evenings. In the interview, Sangmoo saw the three weeks of stay as pyŏnhyŏkke (a revolutionary turning point) in his English improvement. Sangmoo
described how much his English improved through an episode during a trip with his aunt’s family in the last week, when his cousin joined:

Excerpt 3.9: Interview with Sangmoo (August 2013)
Sangmoo: In the third week, I went for a one-week trip to Las Vegas and the Grand Canyon (...) with the three native speakers and me alone [as a non-native English speaker]. My cousin tried to care about me (my English proficiency), but she spat out idioms and spoke so fast. She tried to speak slowly, but it was still fast. I spent two days like that [immersed in communications with native speakers] and in a few moments, I found that I was joking and talking with them. Even though they spoke so fast, I could understand about 70% of their conversations. As they told me that I was good at English speaking, I said that this was because you all spoke slowly and I could understand. All of sudden, with perfectly straight faces, they said that they just talked as they usually did.

This episode shows how language learners think that immersion in a speech community of native speakers may contribute to their language learning. Although Sangmoo stayed with two (near) native speakers for two weeks, when his cousin, another native speaker, joined, he felt the dynamics of communication changed; the young-aged cousin spoke more naturally or authentically, using idioms, and her rate of interaction was the fastest among the three native speakers. As Sangmoo got used to the communication situation, however, he could understand what they were saying and even participated in conversations. Furthermore, Sangmoo stated that the communication settings were not tailored to his English but authentically situated, as his relatives said that “they just talked as they usually did.” The important point to take from Sangmoo’s experience is that the improvement in his English happened naturally to the extent that he did not recognize it. He claims that he could embody their English, as he immersed himself in their life and continually listened to and participated in their native speaking interactions.

The emphasis on the everyday relationship with native English speakers among Korean learners demonstrates that communication with them is not enough to improve their English competence if it is one-shot, straightforward and superficial. In most cases, such communication settings remain in introductions or simple small talks. However, Korean English study abroad students want to deepen and embody their English
competence through extensive and continued interaction with native speakers. Thus, they look for intimacy in their relationship with native speakers in order to acquire “living” English that Korean learners aim to acquire during their study of English abroad. For them, Western English speaking countries are the best places to build such a relationship.

6 Insecurity of “living” English

6.1 Social values of “dead” English

Hiramoto and Park (2014) point out that transnational movements bring out anxiety and insecurity over the values of languages and identities that transmigrants are investing in, as border-crossing inevitably entails encounters with multiple language markets and different kinds of linguistic users. Thus, anxiety and insecurity make them navigate and negotiate various forms and values of languages and speakers in transnational spaces. The project of studying language abroad is not the exception to the occurrence and mechanism of language anxiety and insecurity. Oftentimes, the promise of English study abroad that Korean students have pre-departure is broken, when multiple markets do not work correspondingly or when they confront speakers with more valuable forms of language and cultural capital in the market they compete in.

Among Korean study abroad students, the insecurity of “living” English is first caused by the fact that TOEIC scores still have a social value in the labor market. In this light, Changjung’s story is revealing. Changjung was a male senior among Korean student informants. He went to Toronto in the middle of his graduate studies in journalism at a Korean private university. Upon the completion of his undergraduate courses in Korea, he continued his study in the same department. In the era of high youth unemployment, entering a graduate program is one of the strategies to extend South Korean young adults’ job searching period. Although he enjoyed his graduate studies, he felt he should find employment before his graduation. As he, like others, thought that English was one of the important qualifications for successful employment, he decided to study English abroad. However, because he was late in entering the labor market compared to those of the same age, he was more desperate to improve his English than many undergraduate study abroad students.
Interestingly, in the talk that we had a couple of days before his return to South Korea, he said to me that he spent much after-school time studying TOEIC at home or in a library. He also told me that upon his return to South Korea, he was planning to move to Seoul from his hometown, a city located on the Eastern coast of South Korea, and to attend a TOEIC prep institute in Gangnam, Seoul. Later when I met Changjung in Seoul during my field research in South Korea, as planned, he was living in a Southern region of Seoul near a subway station on the same line as on Gangnam Station (Subway Line 2). Every day he commuted to a Gangnam campus of the Hackers Institute in order to study TOEIC. He said to me that, even though it seemed that his English was better than before his English study abroad, obtaining a high score in TOEIC was a different story. He went on to say that it was good to continue to study English while preparing for TOEIC, but he wanted to get a good score in TOEIC as soon as possible and move on to study for an English speaking test. Changjung’s story suggests that English for standardized tests is not completely a “dead” type of English ability yet. It still represents a social value in the South Korean job market and within job preparation projects.

In fact, South Korean job seekers face a contradiction regarding the use and perception of TOEIC. Although the depreciation of TOEIC as an index of communicative competence is increasing in the country’s job market, it is still extensively used by not only corporations but also higher education and public sectors for recruitment and training purposes. For instance, TOEIC Newsletter, an official document which is published bi-monthly by the TOEIC committee of South Korea, has reported how those institutes employ TOEIC to train their employees and students for global awareness. The institutes state that the use of TOEIC encourages employees and students to study English as they can measure their achievement by the increase in their TOEIC scores. This document has also reported a set of statistics describing the number of test takers, the purposes of test-taking, and the number and name of corporations and institutes that adopt TOEIC scores as an application requirement, thus supporting the continuing use of TOEIC in South Korea (e.g., February 2014 Issue). The number of test takers has continued to increase ever since the time when assessing English oral skills began in the late 2000s. Furthermore, research using nationwide panel data (e.g., Choi & Kim, 2009;
Kim, 2012; Kim & Choi, 2010; Lee, 2014) has shown statistically significant effects of TOEIC scores in relationship to the type and quality of one’s employment.

As Bourdieu (1984) argues, when the value of an old form of capital is not considered sufficiently distinctive, a new form is invented and/or an old form is redefined. In South Korea’s labor market, TOEIC scores work as a mechanism of distinction. We have observed the phenomenon that TOEIC scores have been replaced with another form of assessing communicative English such as speaking tests or English interviews. Although the TOEIC scores have ceased to index the evidence of English communication skills, it has begun to be redefined to ensure its usefulness in the South Korean labor market. Further, in redefining and promoting new social meanings of TOEIC scores, it is corporations who play a key role. Through TOEIC scores, South Korean corporations interpret not only an applicants’ English ability but also their other values and properties. In return, job seekers strive to show these values and properties to obtain employment.

Discourses represented in TOEIC Newsletter have demonstrated how corporations and the TOEIC institute recreate the test’s social values as a way to maintain its power. First, companies and recruiters assume that although English learning for TOEIC does not fully enable learners to improve communication skills, TOEIC scores signal that applicants with high TOEIC scores have basic English skills in business settings. The October 2014 issue of the TOEIC Newsletter featured such a perspective. It claimed that TOEIC is a tool that corporations employ to assess employees’ basic English proficiency and not just a way to learn test taking skills.

Basic English skills matter to corporations, as it means the potential of employees’ English proficiency. Corporations believe that although they do not expect their employees to use English in the workplace at present, they may mobilize employees’ basic English knowledge when they find it necessary in the future. In an interview article published in the April 2008 issue of the TOEIC Newsletter, a manager in the HR department of one of the large engineering and construction corporations in South Korea stated that it is self-explanatory that English is required for employees who work overseas or communicate with international clients or employees. He added, “although they (employees) do not use English at this moment, it could be necessary in the future, so that chôn chigungwŏnŭi haeoe illyŏkhwa (the potential for all employees to work
overseas) should be ensured.” In this light, the inclusion of TOEIC in job applications is a way of managing human resources in today’s globalizing but uncertain business environments.

Second, Korean job seekers assume that corporations interpret high TOEIC scores as a yardstick of the applicants’ basic efforts toward skills development (cf. Kubota, 2011b). As a high TOEIC score is a basic qualification, the lack of it would imply that one does not successfully manage his or her project of skills development. Korean students are concerned that, when they do not have a sufficiently high TOEIC score, employers could view them as applicants who do not have the fundamental qualification that most candidates successfully demonstrate. Although corporations claim that they prefer applicants with new skills and creative personalities, job seekers dare not take the risk venturing into new skills without basic requirements. Rather, they prefer to take the safer route of acquiring basic requirement skills first before attempting to add a new skill set. Such job-seekers’ anxiety over their lack of high TOEIC scores is well-documented in articles in the TOEIC Newsletter. In the 2014 April issue, one undergraduate job seeker interviewed stated that she attended a recruitment workshop and was told by an HR manager of a large company that the corporation first selected applicants using applicants’ TOEIC scores. She said that the use of TOEIC for the first-round selection made sense to her because the company could not review the large number of applications submitted. Further, the 2008 February and 2014 April issues featured news stories which informed readers that although a job applicant was offered an interview in spite of a low TOEIC score, he or she was later told that his or her TOEIC score was not good enough by an interviewer who read through his or her application portfolio, and therefore he or she failed to get the job. As seen in these narratives, through high TOEIC scores, job seekers signal to hiring companies that they not only have the basic language requirement, but also have the will and potential to continue to acquire other skills successfully—an ideal personality in neoliberal times (Ross, 1992; Seo, 2011).

The new social values of high TOEIC scores in the job market cause linguistic insecurity and anxiety over the value of “living” English that English study abroad students are striving to acquire through their transnational practice. Although they value “living” English, they feel they should study “dead” English and obtain high scores on
standardized English tests when they return to Korea and seek employment. The need for “dead” English is unavoidable, as the South Korean recruitment system, called *kongch’ae* (open recruitment), selects from a pool of applicants in the first round by reviewing their application portfolio (Jang, 2015). Only when applicants are selected in the first round are they offered opportunities for the next round of selection. In this system, standardized English test scores play a gatekeeper role. Unless the applicants pass the first round, they do not have a chance to demonstrate their embodied form of English, or “living” English, to their employers.

As a result, even in Toronto, English study abroad students cannot totally dismiss the necessity of studying English in the ways that they did in South Korea—memorizing vocabulary, practicing grammar, and solving English test questions. Furthermore, linguistic insecurity makes Korean students constantly navigate and negotiate between the two different forms of English in their language learning trajectories in order to calibrate their benefits from studying English abroad (Chapter 5).

6.2 In-between position in the South Korean English market

English study abroad students enter the educational market with the linguistic promise that studying English abroad brings oral communicative competence to them. However, the definition of communicative competence often exposes its semiotic “indeterminacy” (Silverstein, 1992; Urciuoli, 2008; Wortham & Reyes, 2015) and “instability” (Hall, 2014) in the South Korean job market. In other words, stakeholders in the labor market do not specify how proficient job seekers should be at English communicative competence and what are “good” English communicative skills. This can be seen in the following examples of job descriptions requiring English abilities in Korean job postings that I collected from bulletin boards at my informants’ universities:

- Good communication & writing skills both in English & Korean—Mercedes-Benz Korea
- Superior verbal and written communication skills (English and Korean)—Nissan Korea Operation and Logistics
- *Yŏngŏ k’omyunik’eisŏn nŭngnyŏk usujadŭl (p’il-su)* (Applicants with good English communication abilities (required))—Carl Zeiss
- *Yŏngŏnŭngt’ongja* (Fluent English speaker)—P & G
• *P’iryŏnyŏngyang: yŏngŏk’ŏmyunik’eisŏn* (fluent isang) (Necessary competence: English communication (more than fluent))—Nexon Korea

These descriptions suggest that communication skills in English are essential, but they do not give more information on what they mean by “good” and “superior” communication skills or “fluent” speakers. Such indeterminacy and instability of the definition of English proficiency in the labor market make Korean young adults constantly measure their relative positions in terms of English proficiency. Their perceived position in the market of English is another cause of linguistic insecurity and anxiety.

Certainly, English study abroad students believe that they have better communicative skills in English than those in their age group who have not studied English abroad. However, the type of English speakers who cause them to be anxious about their English ability is returnee Korean students—*saltaon saram* or *saltaon aedŭl* (Lo & Kim, 2012). Korean undergraduates have witnessed that transnational Korean youth is recently returning to get jobs in globalizing South Korean corporations. This population includes Korean young adults who left the country at a young age for early study abroad, or *chogi yuhak*, or who are second or third generations of Korean emigrants. English study abroad students think that when it comes to English ability, they cannot compete with the returnee students or Korean emigrants’ children who embody the English language and culture in a bona fide way. For instance, Jungmin’s following discussion about English speaking tests shows how English study abroad students stratify South Korean speakers of English in South Korea and justify their language investment:

Excerpt 3.10: Conversation between Jungmin and Dongil (October 2013)
Jungmin: I am sure that English study abroad students will obtain higher scores in OPIc than their Korean counterparts who do not study English abroad. As you study English abroad, you can get to Level 3 (High Intermediate) at least. If you study hard, you can get the Level 4 (Advanced Intermediate). You cannot get higher levels, because you are not *saltaon aedŭl*.

In this conversation, Jungmin justifies the educational practice of studying English abroad by arguing that English study abroad students can get higher scores in an
English speaking test, OPIc, than those who have not studied overseas. However, he also admits that their scores cannot be perfect as they are not returnee students with native English-speaking abilities. He believes that high-advanced English language levels can be obtained only by returnee students, who are viewed as embodying the English of native speakers.

Following this conversation, Dongil talked about an interesting strategy to mobilize the “in-between” English ability in the job-seeking process. He argued that if English study abroad students’ English proficiency was not as good as that of saltaon aedūl, it would be a better strategy to hide their experience of studying English abroad from their job application portfolio and pretend to be a good English speaker who learned oral English skills only within South Korea, called kungnaep’a (domestic group). He said:

Excerpt 3.11: Conversation between Jungmin and Dongil (October 2013)
Dongil: I am told that when I return to South Korea, I should not disclose my English study abroad experience if I find that my English level is not much different from those without it. I am also told that it would be better to hide the fact that I studied English abroad when I am seeking jobs. If I don’t have English ability higher than those who have not studied English abroad, job interviewers would ask what I did during English study abroad and assume that I killed time while abroad. If so, it would be better to show my English ability as if I have not studied English abroad. Then, assuming that I were kungnaep’a, job interviewer would give me more credit for my English.

Dongil’s account shows his insecurity regarding his English level in the South Korean job market, as recruiting employers have different expectations of applicants based on their English learning experience. The “in-between” position of English study abroad students in South Korea’s English market leads them to take the higher, more secure, and profitable option of choosing to compete with Koreans who have not lived or studied abroad, rather than the lower, less secure, and less profitable option of competing for jobs with saltaon aedūl, Koreans who have lived and studied abroad for longer periods.

Because of their in-between position of English competence, some of the Korean students I met also expressed their regret that they did not study abroad in their early
years. For example, Geonyoung could have studied abroad when she was an elementary school student, but her father finally refused due to his patriarchal notion that going abroad alone was “dangerous for girls.” At the time I spoke with her, she was discontent that she was struggling with English, and was envious of her friends who had early study abroad experience. She believed that those friends of hers could enter good universities in South Korea because they possessed good English abilities. Additionally, as she thought that her English was not fully embodied as much as saltaon aedül, she was uncertain how much her English would be valued in the future job market.

7 Conclusion

This chapter has shown the processes of the oppositional construction between the two language ideologies at home and abroad, which are metaphorically termed as “dead” and “living” English, and their effects on the ways of learning English and on the ideas regarding learning spaces. English learning within South Korea is regarded as primarily helpful to those looking to gain a high score in standardized English tests. As a high score for TOEIC, for example, is one of the skills and qualifications for employability, South Korean young adults seek to obtain those high scores in as short a period as possible to allow them to move on and engage in other projects of skills development. The market response to such students’ demand is to standardize what to learn and how to learn it by systematically analyzing test items and devising detailed strategies for correct answers. In contrast, oral communication in English, which is a more valuable form of linguistic capital in the South Korean job market, is perceived as flexible and situational. Korean young adult learners of English are encouraged to search for other places to learn this form of English competence.

My Korean informants’ talks about communicative competence in English have revealed that the language competence is perceived as the embodiment of the English of native speakers. In turn, this perception leads to the characterization of Western English-speaking countries as the most ideal learning space and native English speaking friends as the most ideal interlocutors. It is by this mechanism that the promise of studying English abroad is linguistically reproduced, and that the authority of this educational practice is
produced and granted to the type of language learners who can afford to consume this language commodity (cf. Heller & Martin-Jones, 2001).

This chapter has suggested that the embodiment of the English of native speakers serves as a guiding principle in South Korean undergraduates’ trajectories of English learning in their study abroad. Thus, their practice of learning the more valuable form of English is the enterprise of transforming linguistic habitus from the one regimented in South Korea through standardized and scripted ways of language learning, to the one acquired through experiences with English native speakers. However, English study abroad students are not secure about their newly forming linguistic habitus, as there are always South Koreans who have been investing more time and more material resources into both types of English. In this light, they are more likely to be stuck in between the two types of English. This linguistic insecurity drives Korean transnational students to navigate different spaces and speakers in the course of studying English abroad more strategically and calculatedly. The following two chapters will examine how Korean students navigate “better” English communities to encounter “better” English speakers and communicate with them in “better” English.
CHAPTER FOUR
STRATIFICATION OF ENGLISH SPEAKERS IN MULTILINGUAL TORONTO: NAVIGATING ENGLISH LANGUAGE SPACES

1 Introduction

The promise of English study abroad is produced by the pre-departure expectation that it will bring opportunities to communicate with native English speakers in an authentic situation. However, the City of Toronto is considered as one of the most linguistically and culturally diverse cities in the world. According to 2006 census data, 45.7% of Toronto’s population was foreign born, and, between 2001 and 2006, 40.4% of Canada’s new immigrants landed and began their new life in Toronto (Relph, 2014). The 2011 census shows that 45% of residents in the City of Toronto have a mother tongue other than English and French, and 28% of people speak a language other than the two official languages at home. Such increasing multiculturalism and multilingualism in Toronto have changed the cultural and linguistic landscapes. The presence of non-White and non-native English speaking people is becoming more salient, and the enhancement of multilingualism is observed in linguistic practices such as signboards, advertisements, and services. In terms of English study abroad, the linguistic and cultural diversity in Toronto challenges the authenticity of the English language, or *native speakerism* (Holliday, 2006), that underlies the language industry. However, Toronto has been ranked a top destination pulling South Koreans, as well as possibly other international students, together with Vancouver, another metropolitan city in Canada. This chapter aims to examine how South Korean students deal with the contradiction that exists between their promise of the authenticity of English and the multilingual reality of Toronto.

In this chapter, I report on a key strategy that my research informants employed to cope with the contradiction—the stratification of English speakers that they encountered during their study abroad. The Korean youth studying English in multicultural Toronto tended to stratify English speakers, native or non-native, based on the perceived levels of the interlocutors’ English proficiency and authenticity. This strategy may look straightforward, given that the hierarchical order of the varieties of English in the global language market is centered on native speaker norms. However, what I would like to
show in this chapter is that the strategy is “multilayered” and “polycentric” (Blommaert, 2010; Park & Wee, 2012). More specifically, South Koreans’ stratification of English speakers relies not only on the nation-states boundaries of global English markets, but also on locally bounded speech communities (e.g., homestay, language school, language exchange program, etc.) in which the learners participate as they are on the move.

In order to shed more dynamic light on transnational practices of language, Park (2014) suggests the metaphor of cartographies of language, which he describes as “acts of understanding space through the mediation of metalinguistic conceptions of language and communication” (p. 84). Park highlights the agentive practice of social actors who interpret, map, and navigate spaces of linguistic differences. With this in mind, I see South Korean students in this study as the creators of the maps of language communities that they engage in relation to the values of English. Furthermore, I suggest that the imagination and navigation of language spaces is mediated by the ethnic or cultural categories (or stereotypes) of English speakers (cf. Agha, 2007). The mediation of the speaker figuration is particularly significant in multicultural contexts like Toronto, as English speakers with various accents and proficiency levels and with different personal and cultural experiences, constantly stay, leave, and interact. Thus, as South Korean students meet and mingle with various types of English speakers in everyday life, they reproduce or reconstruct stereotypes of certain English speakers, which affect their trajectories of English learning.

Additionally, in understanding Korean learners’ stratification of English speakers in multilingual contexts, their multiple positions in the host city should be noted. In Toronto, South Korean students’ pursuit of authentic English speakers is not straightforward, as they are perceived by local English speakers as legally temporary visitors, linguistically non-native speakers and ethnically East Asians. Consequently, what the students should address is not only the issue of access to authentic English communities, but also the negotiation of their positions of visibility (McElhinny, Davidson, Catungal, Tungohan, & Coloma, 2012). The visibility issue arises from the tension between a gazing subject as a consumer in the transnational education market and a gazed subject as a linguistic and cultural minority in Toronto. As will be examined in more details, as a consumer, Korean students search for language communities, where
they assume it possible to meet speakers that are more authentic and proficient in English. However, Korean English learners find that they are often invisible or hypervisible to local English speakers; in other words, they are ignored or stereotyped (McElhinny et al., 2012). Their trajectories of stratifying English speakers, which may look strategic and calculated, are a result of their struggles with invisibility and hypervisibility. While doubly positioned, Korean students often linguistically or culturally stereotype non-native English speakers in the same ways that they are stereotyped, in order to maximize opportunities to improve their oral English.

This chapter begins with the exploration of what multiculturalism and multilingualism in Toronto means to English study abroad stakeholders, including students. It will show that the modernist ideology of bounded languages and communities (Bauman & Briggs, 2003; Heller, 2007a; Makoni & Pennycook, 2006) significantly works in the way that Korean students believe that the authenticity of English and multilingualism are not in conflict. The following sections will examine three stratified types of interlocutors: Korean speakers, local native English speakers, and non-native English speakers. Koreans are inauthentic and illegitimate speakers, whereas local Torontonians are authentic and legitimate speakers. The last group, non-native English speakers, are constructed as inauthentic but legitimate speakers (cf. Creese, Blackledge, & Takhi, 2014; Kramsch, 2012). Korean students view non-native speakers as legitimate, as they value affective supports that non-native English speakers show, which local native speakers are likely to ignore. However, the stratification of these English speakers is constantly negotiated in terms of who are ideal interlocutors, because the practices are locally conditioned and articulated with other cultural ideologies (e.g., nationalism, ethnic and cultural stereotypes). Rather than describing the fixity of this stratified structure, the following sections will focus on the processes of negotiations and consequences for recalibrating features of English-speaking interlocutors.

2 Setting boundaries among language communities: Native, non-native and Korean English speakers

In May 2013, when I began my fieldwork at Lingua City, I asked Korean students about their type of accommodation as one of my initial guiding questions. This question
was informed by existing study abroad research (Block, 2007; Kinginger, 2009), which argues that homestay is a key site where international students meet local residents, immerse themselves into local cultures, and build the first social network in host countries. Korean English study abroad students usually arrange their homestays through agencies before arriving at Toronto. Large-sized language institutes like Lingua City have their own departments to arrange homestays for their students.

Through Korean students’ answers to my question, I soon learned that most of the Korean students were living or lived in their early stage of English study abroad with Filipino/a homestay families in Toronto. When I followed up by asking why they did not choose “Canadian” homestay, their answer was a bit blunt: “I wanted, but could not find it.” In fact, this “no supply” of “Canadian” homestay has to do with transformations that a metropolitan city pulling a number of transmigrants is undergoing. The Korean counselor working at Lingua City, named Tiffany, told me about the restructuring of the homestay market:

Excerpt 4.1: Conversation with Tiffany (August 2013)
Tiffany: You should understand, in most cases, people who Korean students call “Canadian” are White. However, it’s tough to find homestay run by White people around downtown Toronto. When students find a homestay, they take into account not only race but also the length of commuting. I see that 45 minutes are at their psychological maximum. But there is little White homestay within the area of 45-minute commuting. No supply! New immigrants still enter into Toronto, they enter into downtown, and White people tend to change their residence. They move to suburban regions. The largest ethnic populations who now come to Toronto are Indians, Filipinos and the Chinese. Indians and Filipinos basically speak English, so they can run homestay. Then, Filipino foods are more similar to Korean foods.

Tiffany’s account suggests that, first of all, the dominance of Filipino/as running homestay is the result of Toronto urban transformations, Canada’s immigration policies, and Filipino/a English capital. As she mentions, there are not many “Canadian” families who want to host international students within the radius of 45-minute commuting to the school by public transportations. As most of the language schools are located in downtown Toronto, the candidate areas are limited to urban or inner suburban regions. To add to this, (upper) middle-class families in these regions have no financial reason to host
students. However, low-income immigrants need to run homestay to procure an additional source of money for their living or wire to their families at home. They tend to reside in non-prestigious or non-affluent neighborhoods easily accessible to public transportation. Moreover, recently, as the Canada government is favorable to the immigrations of domestic or service workers with good English skills (Coloma, McElhinny, Tungohan, Catungal, & Davidson, 2012), the Filipino/a population is increasing, and they are entering the homestay market for international students in Toronto. Filipino/a English competence acquired in their home along with Tagalog enables them to look more attractive in the English study abroad industry.

The formation of the Filipino/a homestay market in Toronto results from a series of transformations in Canadian social and ethnic structures and relevant public policies. As temporary visitors, Korean English study abroad students cannot help but accept the social “fact.” They do not have a choice but to live with low-income immigrant families unless they choose to go to another small city where the percentage of the White native English speaking population is relatively high (Yoon, 2014a). Stakeholders in language teaching industries in Toronto seem to urge their clients to accept such multilingual and multicultural characteristics of Toronto by highlighting other attractive points (e.g., Filipino/a families as good service providers) or by speaking about multiculturalism as an essence of Canadian culture.

Multiculturalism itself is not “a problem” in the English study abroad market; rather, what matters is how multiculturalism affects students’ English learning. It may be tenuous or simplistic to argue that multiculturalism in Toronto essentially undermines its market of English study abroad. In contrast, I have witnessed that South Koreans perceive multiculturalism as a resource for cosmopolitan capital (Chapter 7). However, when it comes to linguistic authenticity, it is also true that the existence of various types of English speakers with different accents and proficiency levels is one of the important

14 Tiffany’s speculation was based on over ten years of experience working in private English education sectors in Toronto. However, it may be supported by an academic investigation on Toronto urban planning and geographical transformation. For instance, Jungmin, Dongil, and Insung lived near Eglinton West Station, and Geonyoung near Warden Station. They all had to take a bus from these stations to home. According to Hulchanski (2010) and Relph (2014), these regions are included in clusters of neighborhoods where the percentage of migrant and visible minorities is high and the average income is low.
considerations in the process of Korean students’ choice of a host city. Toronto has ambivalence as a host city of English study abroad.

When I heard about my informants’ choice of Toronto as a destination city, their evaluation of Toronto similarly demonstrated the contradiction in regards to linguistic authenticity. Some students argued that Toronto was a good place for English learning because there are a number of native English speakers (NES) or “Canadians,” whereas the others disagreed because of the salience of non-native English speakers (NNES) or ethnic minorities. Of importance is that despite the different evaluations, both camps shared the underlying ideology of multilingualism; that is, even though Toronto is a multicultural and multilingual city, ethnic or language communities are separate and bounded.\(^{15}\) Furthermore, before leaving South Korea, both camps of the South Korean students believed that they could manage access to these “imagined” communities. In other words, when they chose Toronto, the multicultural and multilingual aspects were not completely considered a threat to their English learning, as they thought that they would seek a bounded community of authentic English speakers while avoiding another bounded community of inauthentic speakers.

To illustrate, I will show two excerpts detailing why my informants chose Toronto. It should be noted that their choice of Toronto was always made in comparison to other cities in Canada. First, Dongil said that Toronto was considered better than Vancouver regarding English learning:

Excerpt 4.2: Interview with Dongil (July 2013)
Dongil: My brother told me that Vancouver was a good place to play. It is not suitable for studying English. In such a small city, there are a lot of Asians. It looks like there are many Asians in Toronto, too, but Toronto is big, so if I try to look at all the corners of Toronto, I would be able to meet more Canadians. But Vancouver would give fewer chances for this.

Referring to his brother’s experience of English study abroad in Vancouver, Dongil assumed that Vancouver was a good place for leisure but not for English learning.

\(^{15}\) The belief that languages are bounded and countable systems and language communities are equally separable and defined, is the key linguistic regime in modern nation-states and societies (Bauman & Briggs, 2003; Heller, 2007a, 2008; Makoni & Pennycook, 2006). It still works powerfully on ideologies and practices of bilingualism and multilingualism (Heller, 2006, 2007b).
The main reason for such an evaluation of Vancouver was the larger number of Asians, which reminded me that because of the considerable number of Chinese immigrants, Korean English study abroad students often called Vancouver “Hongcouver.” In choosing a city for his English study abroad, Dongil regarded the Asian population as an impediment to English learning, presupposing that Asian English was inauthentic in his imagination of the ethnolinguistic stereotypes (i.e., White Anglo-Saxon as native English speakers)—it was “yellow” English (Reyes & Lo, 2009). Contrary to seeing Vancouver as a good place for leisure, Dongil viewed Toronto as a better place for English learning. He admitted that immigrants from various continents comprised a large part of the population in Toronto. However, he appreciated that he was more likely to meet “Canadians” on the grounds that, comparing to Vancouver, Toronto had a larger number of English-speaking Canadians. Thus, his choice of Toronto was rooted in his quantitative calculation of the demographics of the two cities. Dongil thought that his choice was rational, because he saw “Canadian” communities as existing separate from other ethnolinguistic communities while erasing the complexity of flow and mixture of various groups.

On the other hand, Changjung thought that Toronto was not a good city for English learning. From his account, the city he compared Toronto to was Calgary. He stated:

Excerpt 4.3: Interview with Changjung (February 2014)
Changjung: When they (a couple of his father’s customer) went on a honeymoon, the husband spoke English fluently and very well, like a native speaker. (…) I was told that he struggled a lot when he first got to Toronto. Toronto was not good. There were a lot of international students and people with other nationalities, but not many local and Canadian students. He thought that Toronto was not the place that he had imagined, so he moved to Calgary. He said that people in Calgary were very kind. All the time that he initiated a conversation, they got into it. So his English improved a lot. (…) But I thought that I could do so even in Toronto. I was determined that I would not meet Koreans but meet only foreigners. But I met Seulki (a Korean female student) on the first day ((laugh)) at Phonebox (Korean-run mobile company).
As Dongil did, Changjung also refers to someone else’s experience of studying English abroad in Canada. He talks about his father’s customer who studied English abroad and whose fluent and “native-like” English surprised his wife on their honeymoon overseas. According to Changjung, he first landed in Toronto, but moved to Calgary, since he found that there were a number of international students and immigrants in Toronto. In contrast, Calgary satisfied him because most of the residents were not only native speakers but also warmly accommodating to him. Consequently, he was able to improve his English communicative competence as he proved it on the honeymoon. In his narrative of his father’s customer, Changjung associates Toronto’s multiculturalism as a threat to English learning and evaluates a smaller city (e.g., Calgary) as a more ethnically homogenous place. However, despite the success of the narrated person in Calgary, Changjung did not choose Calgary. Above all, Changjung trusted his resolution that he would try to meet only native English speakers. Additionally, he had it in mind that he would not meet Koreans at all in Toronto. However, both firm resolutions turned out unachievable on the first day of his stay in Toronto.

Changjung’s reason for choosing Toronto shows a typical discursive structure that I also found in other Korean students’ accounts. This structure entails two components. The first component is, “I know the limitations of Toronto, but I will be different,” and the second is, “Meet native speakers and avoid Koreans.” This discursive structure carries three implications. First, the communities of Korean speakers are established as another bounded language space. In contrast to imagined NES communities, they are constructed as an object of avoidance and as an impediment to English learning, as with Asian communities in Dongil’s account above. Second, the opposition between NES communities and Korean communities erases other ethnolinguistic groups living in Toronto (Irvine & Gal, 2000). As part of pre-departure determination for successful English study abroad, both guidebooks and students’ accounts highlight the importance of the axiom, “Meet native English speakers and avoid Koreans.” While native English speakers are represented as local English-speaking Canadians, specifically White Canadians, various types of English speakers are ignored or not fully considered. Third, the question of whether Korean learners succeed in English study abroad is represented as dependent on the student’s will to succeed. It is assumed that, insofar as the two language
communities are bounded, it is the learners’ responsibility that determines the access to language spaces.

This last discourse may be a part of neoliberal self-development, in the sense that it highlights individual will, freedom, and responsibility—all of the technologies of neoliberal governmentality (Lemke, 2001; Ross, 1992). As discussed in Chapter 2, the public discourse of failure regarding South Koreans studying English abroad naturally gives rise to another set of discourses—know-how for success. The how-to discourses involve not only behavioral strategies such as “Use English only,” “Don’t use Korean,” “Avoid Koreans and Korean culture,” “Don’t be shy in front of foreigners,” but also moral imperatives of enacting those strategies. This moral command is characterized as tokhage (doggedness) (Jang, 2014). In other words, prospective students are urged to work hard in conducting such strategies, acknowledging that the actual practices of such suggested strategies are highly demanding (Park, 2010a).

The reason Korean young adults choose Toronto despite its multiculturalism, thus, is grounded in their ideology of multilingualism; languages as separate entities and language communities as bounded spaces. This ideology contributes to the creation of their belief that they can manage multilingualism by controlling access to bounded ethnolinguistic communities and speakers, and that multilingualism can exist with the linguistic authenticity of English. However, language ideology is always subject to tensions and negotiations in language practices (Heller, 2007a). In the following sections, I will examine how Korean students deal with each language community during their English study abroad.

3 Avoiding Koreans: National impostors and backlash

3.1 Institutional constraints on avoiding Koreans

Korean students’ two pre-departure resolutions, meeting with native English speakers and not engaging with Koreans, are constructed from the belief that they should speak English only in the transnational education setting. Specifically, Korean learners view a group of ethnic Koreans as a major barrier to speaking English only, assuming that Koreans have a strong membership of their national language (J. S.-Y. Park, 2009a).
Thus, they are concerned that if they meet and talk with Koreans in Toronto, it is the Korean language that will be the language of medium, and that their English-only policy will be compromised.

Their attempt to evade Korean speech communities typically begins at school, the first place where they encounter Koreans in their journey. They are keenly conscious of Korean students in classes that they register in. For instance, Jungmin, Minsik, Insung, Dongil, as well as other Korean students, recounted their effort to keep some distance from other Korean students in their early stage of English study abroad. On the first day of a new session, they always counted the number of Korean classmates. They could tell who were Koreans by listening to self-introductions because they heard Korean accents in Korean classmates’ English, as well as by glancing at their racial appearance and cultural artifacts, such as fashion styles and brands. Then, they tried not to sit next to Korean classmates, as there was potential for them to do classroom activities together. Speaking English with Koreans could not justify Korean students’ transnational education, as they can do so in English conversation classes in South Korea. Moreover, they felt it could make them fail to embody native English and disembodied linguistic influences from their native Korean language (Chapter 3). The Korean learners were concerned that their English in pursuit of native speaker English would be contaminated by “accented” and “non-standard” English used by other Koreans.

However, I soon learned that there were few Korean students who met only with non-Koreans and spoke English only. Most of the Korean students at Lingua City spent time with other Korean classmates and went to Korean restaurants to eat *samgyŏpsal* (pork belly) and drink soju. When the peer group consisted of Koreans only, it was natural that the Korean language was predominantly used in communication. In contrast with their initial resolutions or advice in guidebooks, they happened to form a Korean peer group, which seemed to play certain roles in Korean students’ life in Toronto (Chapters 6 and 7).

Presumably, there are several reasons for the inevitability of Korean students’ national networking. First, Korean students represent a high percentage of students at Lingua City. Although Korean students tried to manage their relationships with other Korean classmates, it could not be denied that there was a greater likelihood of finding
Korean friends with whom they felt well-matched with regards to personalities and interests.

Second, Toronto has a large population of Korean immigrants and two Korea Towns. Although Korean immigrants and English study abroad students tangentially share their areas of life, businesses for Korean immigrants like restaurants, hair salons, and travel agencies tend to attract Korean English study abroad learners as well. Moreover, this large number of Korean English study abroad students leads Korean immigrants to open businesses targeting these students such as local study abroad agencies and mobile service companies (Kwak & Hiebert, 2007). For instance, a number of Korean students open a mobile account through a small Korean mobile company named Phonebox, which offers better plans than major Canadian counterparts such as Bell or Rogers. When Korean students use services provided by the Korean business, they do not have to speak English, making it easier to deal with unfamiliar Canadian plans and billing systems. Indeed, in Toronto, Korean students can find almost any service offered in the Korean language. As a result, businesses owned and offered by Korean immigrants may block Korean students from fully “immersing” themselves in Canadian social systems.

Third, Korean peer groups serve as an important source of information on courses and teachers at Lingua City. One of the common topics of conversations among Korean students is concerned with evaluations of courses that they are taking, the teachers, and their English proficiency (Chapter 2). Information shared within Korean peer groups helps them to navigate courses that satisfy their educational needs and to discover tips and know-how for English learning (Chapter 5).

The fourth reason for the engagement into a Korean community is that Koreans benefit from the psychological well-being of sharing their concerns and securing emotional supports. As in other border-crossing experiences, English study abroad causes emotional and cultural dissonance. To cope with depression, loneliness and/or other emotional difficulties, Korean students tend to lean toward the same national or ethnic group (Chapters 6 and 7).

In spite of the institutional constraints at school and in Toronto and the necessity of Korean peers for their life and learning, it is also the case that some of the Korean
students, if a few, succeed in mingling with non-Korean friends during their English study abroad. The case of the “successful” students suggests that the institutional constraints do not fully explain the formation of Korean peer groups and that students possibly have room for managing the institutional constraints. Of more importance is that the management of access to Korean peer groups is also mediated by social relations in which the discourse of avoiding Koreans is interpreted and circulated. This point of view draws our attention to the discursive effects made in Korean students’ everyday practices in relation to the category of Korean students avoiding Koreans.

3.2 “Asshole” students: Affective responses and national labeling

It did not take long for me to learn that the act of avoiding Koreans was negatively evaluated among Korean students. I first heard about this negative view held by Korean students in an interview I conducted with Tiffany, a Korean counselor at Lingua City, in May 2013. In the interview, she brought up a type of Korean student who may be characterized as avoiding Koreans:

Excerpt 4.4: Interview with Tiffany (May 2013)
Tiffany: As soon as they arrived in Toronto, they are thinking about what should be their priority, completely, how can I put it, only English. But there are not a number of such students who try to speak only English with friends from other countries. They are told “chaesuŏpta” (you’re an asshole) by other Korean students, but they try to hang out with foreign friends as much as possible, and not to bump into Korean students. There is that kind of student, but they are not a majority.

Tiffany statement shows that there are Korean students who are highly determined and calculative in achieving their goals (“priority”) of English study abroad from the beginning. She highlights that English-only is their key principle for successful English study abroad. Further, to keep this self-principle, these types of Korean students strive to meet non-Korean classmates and avoid Korean students at the school. However, she goes on to say that such Korean students are often told by other Korean classmates that they are an asshole (“chaesuŏpta”). Therefore, for these types of Korean students to continue
to maintain an English-only discipline, they must ignore or overcome a negative framing. However, they are not “a majority” among Korean students at Lingua City.

School ethnographic research has shown that “successful” students are often negatively labeled or stereotyped by other students, even though they have agency in constructing their self-identities (e.g., Bucholtz, 2011; Eckert, 1989; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Heller, 2006; Willis, 1977). On the one hand, negative labeling stems from the perceived transgression of historically constructed collective identity such as ethnicity and class. On the other hand, students with high achievement are seen as adherents of dominant school rules and mainstream ideologies. In the context of Korean post-secondary English study abroad, first of all, the negative framing is mediated by Korean students’ affective responses to “successful” students, such as jealousy or envy (cf. Abelmann and Lie, 1995, as cited in Lo and Kim, 2012). The effects are anchored in the fact that English study abroad is an educational investment paid with individual funds (Chapter 2). For instance, Dongil suggested why there was a feeling of envy connected to financial matters, when Korean learners, including himself, saw other Koreans hanging out with non-Korean classmates:

Excerpt 4.5: Interview with Dongil (October 2013)
In Chull: All of the Koreans that I met said that they wanted to have a friend other than Koreans.
Dongil: Of course. Absolutely. Because they come to study English here
In Chull: But it is not easy.
Dongil: That’s true.
In Chull: They feel lonely, and if they madly try to make a foreign friend, how can I put it, they are an object of contempt by other Koreans.
Dongil: They say, he/she is doing tokhage (doggedly). But even though they say so, don’t they envy Korean students hanging out with non-Koreans? [I am sure] They must do. They think like “I am spending money like them, but what on earth am I now doing?” I believe that it is okay to meet Koreans and speak the Korean language to them. But meeting them all the time, I think, that is a bit, something that I could do in Korea. So I am wondering why they are doing so even though they come here.

In this interview, I explicitly asked Dongil why Korean students negatively viewed other Korean students befriending only non-Koreans even though they similarly wished to do so. Dongil describes these types of students as tokhan (dogged)—another
negative Korean term categorizing successful students. However, at the same time, he goes on to say that he and others envy such Korean students. Furthermore, Dongil indicates that the feeling of envy is in parallel with other emotional reactions—guilt and anxiety. They feel guilty about meeting Koreans because they are doing what they would do in South Korea, while spending an amount of money on overseas education. Also, they are anxious that the extensive, if not exclusive, networks with Koreans impede them from improving English proficiency. Such a structure of feeling (William, 1977) reveals that a majority of Korean students who fail to avoid Korean speakers may project their inner struggles with linguistic investment onto a minority of Korean students who succeed in avoiding Koreans. This psychological or affective complex is linked to the materiality of English study abroad. The investment into linguistic or cultural capital constantly causes anxiety about the material returns.

Mediated by the affective responses, the negative labeling of Korean students who avoid Koreans at school is readily associated with Korean collective identity and nationalism. Especially, the acts of “successful” Korean students are viewed as against Korean habitus and as the acts of national impostors. In the following excerpt, for example, Geonyoung sees this type of Korean student as having “bad personalities” because they are impolite and unfriendly to other Koreans. Yeŭi (good manner) and konggyŏng (respect) are represented as shared Korean cultural traits:

Excerpt 4.6: Interview with Geonyoung (July 2013)
Geonyoung: There are some students with bad personality. (...) One girl is really like a psycho. When my homestay sister asked her about the meaning of an English word, she spat out [in English], “you have to be searching [sic] dictionary.” My [homestay] sister got stunned. She is thirty years old, and the twenty-year-old girl said to her, like “You even don’t know this? What did you study so far? Why should we be in the same class?” This is rude. Both are Koreans and share the Korean chŏngsŏ (sentiment). But she (the younger Korean girl) shows a very good attitude to foreigners but does not turn her eyes on Koreans at all.

When I asked Geonyoung the same question that I had asked Dongil, she brought to the fore a story of what her Korean friend experienced with another Korean student. The Korean young woman treated her friend in impolite and disrespectful ways. She refused
to help Geonyoung’s friend with her English vocabulary problem and occasionally offended her because of her lower English proficiency. To Geonyoung, such behaviors looked problematic because of the age gap between her friend and the “psycho-like girl.” The female student should have respected Geonyoung’s older friend because they were all “Koreans.” She should have known the rules and feeling regarding how to treat people older than her. In Geonyoung’s account, the negative meaning of avoiding Koreans is associated with the collective habitus of Korean culture. In turn, she views the student acting in non-Korean ways as a national impostor who prefers and welcomes non-Korean English speakers but shows apathy or even hostility to Koreans.

As J. S.-Y. Park (2009) points out, in South Korea, English learning has been a terrain of ideological contestations between necessity and nationalism. Although Koreans face a necessity for English in a globalizing society, provocative proposals or actions for learning English have been criticized as dismissing Korean national identity and pride. Given the ideologies of English in South Korea, even in the study abroad context, avoiding Koreans may be painted as the acts of national impostors or betrayers who violate or transgress a sense of Korean nationalism that most Koreans are culturally and ideologically conditioned to embody. Labeling Korean students who avoid Koreans as chaesuŏpta, tokhata, psycho-like or other negative words shows that speaking English only and meeting only with non-Koreans may be established as a target of the backlash of nationalism in English study abroad learners’ everyday life. This backlash may impose a burden on most of the Korean students who study English abroad.

3.3. “Cheap girl”: Nationalism and gendered labeling

Following her narration of her friend’s experience, Geonyoung told me: “I don’t know why, but most of the Korean students who do so are girls.” She added that this was why she had few Korean female friends, and most of her Korean friends were men. This comment sounded compelling because it illuminated that the discourse of nationalism associated with avoiding Koreans might be gendered.

As studies on South Korean women have shown, Korean nationalism has assigned certain subject positions to women within the nation-state building, industrial
development, and globalization of South Korea (Kendall, 2002; Kim & Choi, 1998). In particular, the colonial and post-colonial relations with China, Japan, and the U.S. positioned and still continue to position Korean women in contact with foreign males as “dangerous to national integrity” (Choi, 1998, p. 25). Chungmoo Choi argues, “these women are then relegated to the status of ‘prostitute.’ They are not only considered defiled but also traitors to the patriarchally constructed nation and outcast at the boundary of that nation” (p. 25). In relation to Western men, the typical image of the Korean women is represented as yanggongju (Yankee whores, Western princess), who sell their bodies to American soldiers placed in US military camps within postwar South Korea. Although they are forced to serve military men in the sex industry by their deprived low-class backgrounds and the government’s hidden interventions, yanggongju is often described as national impostors within Korean public discourse. Furthermore, the image of yanggongju is reshaped and circulated in various social and cultural spaces, including interracial/inter-ethnic marriage or romance between Western men and Korean women.

At Lingua City, Jiwon was noticeable among Korean students, as she hung out only with Latin American students. She was a student of medicine in a prestigious university in South Korea. Her motivation to study English abroad was not career-oriented for her future job. As she said, medicine students do not need to study English abroad as their career trajectories are somewhat streamlined. Jiwon wanted to stay overseas for a break in her life before entering intensive medicine courses, as well as for the cosmopolitan experiences connected to studying English abroad. In an interview with her, she said that her future dream was to become a hyŏnmyangch’ŏ (a wise mother and motherly wife)—an iconic figure of the ideal women in Korean (neo-) Confucian patriarchal ideology (Cho, 2002), even if she would be a professional. In spite of her apparently conservative perspective on gender roles, she preferred to hang out with Latin American students at the school. She stated:
Excerpt 4.7: Interview with Jiwon (July 2013)\(^6\)

Jiwon: My purpose is English learning. I don’t have to speak Korean here. I don’t want to make Korea friends here. If they (Korean students at the school) are really good at English, and they like to hang out with my foreign friends too, that would be really good. But, you know, I couldn’t find anyone, that’s why, but, like, I can understand what I am doing and what they are talking about me as well. Maybe if I hug with Latin American friends or like that, maybe they say like, “oh, I don’t like that,” “she is like a cheap girl,” like, “she is like always hang out with like that,” “maybe she will be just something with that (she will be just doing something with them).” They will be like that. I know. But I don’t care. I don’t care. But they think like that. I know.

In this excerpt, first, Jiwon positions herself as a motivated student of English, which may correspond to the ideology of English-only for successful English abroad, even though the prospect of her future job is the most stable among Korean peers. It seems that she just wanted to keep this principle rather than intentionally exclude other Koreans. However, she found it difficult to meet Koreans who wanted to hang out with her and her non-Korean classmates with high English proficiency. As she was isolated from Korean peer groups, she faced the situation that other Koreans talked about her behaviors, particularly, bodily performances such as hugs or kiss on the cheek with Latin American friends, which is their custom.

In fact, Jiwon enjoyed spending time with both Latin American men and women for her English and cosmopolitan experiences. However, Jiwon’s comments make more explicit other Koreans’ gendered understandings of her acts by mentioning that they may call her a “cheap girl.” This term resonates with the image of *yanggongju*, because the acts linked with the term not only involve hanging out with Latin Americans but also further imaginations of sexual intercourse (“something with that”). Although Jiwon is aware of such evaluations of her, she does not care.\(^7\) Again, her purpose of studying English abroad is to learn and use English.

\(^6\) This interview was conducted in English. I initiated it in English as I had never seen her speaking in the Korean language. Even though she knew that I was Korean, she did not ask me to change to speaking in Korean.

\(^7\) In the relationship between Asian women and Western men, Asian women are not simply positioned as an object of the sexual fantasy of the Western men. As shown in Takahashi’s (2013) research on Japanese women in Australia, Asian women have agency in these types of relationships. In support of Takahashi’s research, Jiwon also tried to take the initiative in her relationships with Latin American male classmates.
The label of a “cheap girl” implies that Korean female students avoiding other Koreans are gendered into two meanings: sexually disordered and materially oriented. A “cheap” girl is perceived as female students who buy English capital by selling their sexuality. This discourse serves as another layer of the burden that Korean female students face when making the choice to avoid other Koreans. In fact, the negative stereotype of this kind of Korean female students is circulated within Korean peer groups. Korean male students joke that they would not permit their future daughters to study English abroad since they know about Korean women’s life in Toronto—“they are mullanhaeyo” (disordered or promiscuous). On the other hand, Korean senior female students also criticize younger female students who tend to employ dating as a way of English practice, since it is too calculative and ego-centered. Unless Korean female students neglect such negative and nationalist comments, they are concerned about the gendered backlash against the act of meeting non-Korean male students.

4 Searching for authentic speakers: The paradox of invisibility and hypervisibility

4.1 Exchange logic and decoupled authenticity for networking with “Canadians”

Almost all of my Korean informants seem to be aware that it is not easy to meet and build relationships with Canadians. Above all, they do not have any already established social network in Toronto, which they would employ as a springboard for further networking. As temporary visitors, Korean learners start from scratch in order to obtain access to Canadian communities. In a sense, English study abroad students confront similar difficulties as new immigrants who struggle to set up networks in their host societies (Allan, 2013; Kerekes, Chow, Lemak, & Zhanna, 2013). It is in this context that Korean students seek and navigate communities of native English speakers by calculating and mobilizing their linguistic, cultural, and even sexual resources. Jiyoung, a Korean female student, contended that Korean learners need to “do research” rather than blindly “search for Canadians” (Interview, January 2014). She did research and made a presentation on how to make a Canadian friend in one of her classes. In the presentation,  

For example, she said that she got the sense of reading sexually laden intentions and developed ways of getting out of “the trap.”
she suggested doing volunteer work and language/cultural exchanges. These two suggestions imply that in order to start networking with Canadians, Korean learners should make themselves visible to native English speakers; in other words, they provide a certain resource that Canadians would be interested in.

McElhinny et al. (2012) argue that migrants or minority groups face a paradox in the issue of visibility; they are invisible and hypervisible. Likewise, Korean students confront this same paradox in their efforts to gain access to the communities of native English speakers. Even if Korean students try to exchange linguistic, cultural, and material resources that they possess, the values of the resources are often misrecognized or depreciated by locals. I will examine the processes of invisibility and hypervisibility in two sites that Korean students think are available to them: as Jiyoung suggested above, language exchange and volunteer work. The first site is a place where Korean students attempt to exchange the Korean language and culture for authentic English. The latter site is the place where Korean students look to meet local Torontonians by offering their time and labor to altruist organizations.

Before examining these two sites, we need to revisit Korean students’ concept of native speakers in multilingual Toronto. While in Toronto, Korean students come to realize that English native speakers are not always racially White and ethnically Anglo-Saxon. Although they still have a preference toward White native English speakers and often show the misconception that White people are naturally native speakers of English, Korean students decouple linguistic authenticity from cultural/ethnic authenticity.\(^{18}\) The following excerpt illustrates the transformation of Korean students’ concept of native speakers in multicultural Toronto:

---

\(^{18}\) Blommaert (2010) argues that as language as a resource becomes a mobile and border-crossing sign in the social practice of globalization, it often loses its indexical meaning of origin and assigns a new local meaning to it. Referring to him, Schneider (2014) shows that consumers of salsa dance in Western countries such as Germany and Australia do not always link the dance culture to Latin American backgrounds and the Spanish language. On the other hand, Piller (2012) argues that in multilingual contexts, language proficiency is decoupled from or replaced for ethnic or racial categories and serves as a yardstick for social inclusion and exclusion. Similarly, Haque (2012) shows that, in Canada, the regulation of the two official languages is a key strategy for addressing the conundrum of social integration in an official framework of multiculturalism. These studies suggest how the nexus of language, ethnicity, and race is reformulated in the context of increasing multiculturalism.
Excerpt 4.8: Interview with Geonyoung (July 2013)

Geonyoung: For sure, they (locals) are Canadians, but they immigrated. There are a lot of such people (immigrants). All of them say that they are Canadians, but what we think as Canadians is White or something (Anglo-Saxon). (laughs) Such people (White Anglo-Saxons).

In Chull: Do you have any chance to meet such people?

Geonyoung: So I am doing a language exchange, and even some people accost us when we’re hanging out. One of my Canadian friends, his parents are Indians, and he is a local, but he cannot speak an Indian language. Always English. His second language is French.

Before this conversation, Geonyoung and I were talking about how difficult it was to make Canadian friends. When I said that I had just one close Canadian friend except for classmates or colleagues, she mentioned the quote above. According to her, the definition of “Canadians” among Korean English abroad students is racialized; they are White. Her laugh following this comment perhaps shows that she is aware that this definition may sound racist. However, her laugh may also demonstrate that it is also an undeniable truism (cf. Shin, 2015a; Yoon, 2014a). When I ask her whether she has any chance to meet White Canadians, she circumscribes an answer, instead responding that she is participating in language exchange opportunities to meet White people. Following this, she states that she already has one local Canadian friend of Indian background.

Geonyoung grants him the authority of English native speaker by making it explicit that his first language is not an Indian language but English. By adding that his second language is French, the other official language of Canada, she also implies that her friend is an authentic local Canadian. Through this discursive strategy, Geonyoung suggests that her friend is a Canadian citizen or at least immigrated to Canada at an early age and thus ensures that he is a native English speaker even though he is not racially White or ethnically Anglo-Saxon.

This way of authenticating (Bucholtz, 2003) English interlocutors is commonly employed by Korean students. As they see that a number of English speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds speak English like native speakers and that all the White are not identical in terms of their ethnicities and English accents, their criterion of native English speaker shifts from race (e.g., White or Black) to the status of citizenship or the time of immigration (e.g., 1.5 or 2 generation). When Korean learners introduce non-
White and in particular Asian Canadian friends to other Koreans, they tend to make sure that their friends are native English speakers by making explicit comments on the history of their friend’s citizenship or immigration status. Through this discursive tactic, the Korean international students justify their pursuit of linguistic authenticity in multicultural contexts.\(^\text{19}\)

4.2 Language exchange: Gendered access and the issue of Asian sexuality

As Jiyoung and Geonyoung already suggested, language exchange between (native) Korean speakers and (native) English speakers is initially imagined as the site of intercultural activities that most Korean students expect to meet Canadians. Mostly, they attempt to find a language exchange buddy via websites, which provide platforms for individually searching and connecting users who are interested in language exchange. For instance, Geonyoung told me that she visited Interpals (www.interpals.com). On such web services, Korean learners who are interested in Korean-English exchanges create accounts and update their personal profiles. Then, they wait for a message from English speakers living in Toronto, who are interested in learning the Korean language and culture. Interestingly, the result of being connected with local Torontonians is markedly different according to gender. Almost none of my male informants were successful, whereas most of the female students received messages from multiple users. It indicates that the access to language exchange is gendered and that sexuality works as a resource for exchange in this practice, as opposed to intercultural exchanges that Korean learners expected. In other words, Korean female students are hypervisible as “Asian girls” under the gaze of local men.

Jiyoung, who viewed language exchange as a way of making a Canadian friend, describes her experience of this process as follows:

Excerpt 4.9: Interview with Jiyoung (January 2014)

Jiyoung: To meet Canadians, I began with language exchange. But there were a lot of pyŏnt’ae (perverts) there. So I thought that it wasn’t what I

\(^{19}\) In the meantime, the decoupled cultural authenticity, which Korean English study abroad learners often understand as the West, is pursued through consumption in tourism and participation in local festivals and cultural activities (Chapters 6 and 7).
wanted, and even I heard about bad things about language exchange. So instead I signed up to Meetup and searched language exchange or culture exchange there, where I could meet a group of people frequently. By the way, I was told that when I join, I should wear makeup and dress up. This is actually how it works. Rather than just going and talking, if you look pretty, a lot of men approach you, and when you approach women, they welcome you. To be honest, all of my Canadian friends are men. No woman ever. I didn’t mean it, but that’s the reality.

Jiyoung initially tried to find language exchange buddies via websites. However, she realized that those who were interested typically approached her for sexual purposes, perhaps dating or sexual relations, as she calls them “pervert.”20 Her experience coincided with what her friends described, as well. Thus, she decided to change the site for language exchange from a one-to-one format (e.g., Interpals) to a group format (e.g., Meetup). As the latter platform allows a person or persons to organize a social event with a certain objective one-time or on a regular basis, language or cultural exchange opportunities organized on Meetup (www.meetup.com) are more social. For this reason, Korean students, including Jiyoung, see a language exchange community on Meetup as a place where the burden of the intimacy in one-to-one language exchange can be lessened. However, Jiyoung suggests that, even in group interactions, the hypervisibility of Asian women is not reduced. In order to draw attention from attendees and have more opportunities to meet and talk with local Canadians, Jiyoung feels the need to get herself dress up and wear make-up, which she did not usually do when she went to her language school. She admits that all of her Canadian friends are males even though she did not mean it.

Geonyoung, another female student in the group of my informants, had a similar experience of hypervisibility as an Asian woman searching for language exchange via websites. She also thought of language exchange as a promising way to meet with a native speaker, and thus uploaded her profile on Interpals. Like Jiyoung, she admitted that female students had a higher possibility of connecting with local Torontonians:

---

20 Sexual harassment committed by local males is a critical issue in female students’ experiences of overseas learning. Study abroad research has shown that it has negative effects on female students’ access to local cultures and communities (Block, 2007; Kinginger, 2009).
Excerpt 4.10: Interview with Geonyoung (July 2013)
Geonyoung: If you are a woman and the other is a man, it would be easier to be matched up. I wish I would meet a woman ((pause)) It’s ok, though, but there are a lot of men who are interested in Asian girls. If they are just friends, I would just meet and have conversations ((pause)) [However,] there is a little bit of risk, because they approach me online.

Even though she wanted to meet female English speakers, the match-ups on the website were made exclusively with local men. Geonyoung states that the language exchange between local men and “Asian girls” are not always problematic if the meeting is intended for friendship purposes. However, she feels intimidated by the fact that there is a risk in one-to-one meetings mediated through online platforms, as she cannot foresee the actual intention of the other person.

In Toronto, Geonyoung had language exchanges with two local men who she thought approached her for different purposes: one for friendship and the other for dating. The first case was a language exchange with a local White man. For her, he looked truly interested in the Korean culture and language. Before living in Toronto, he lived in South Korea for one year and taught Taekwondo in English. He was also a big fan of Korean TV shows including a show called Running Man. Whenever they met, they talked about the TV show, and he would ask questions about Korean culture. Geonyoung enjoyed answering his questions in English and hearing him try to speak some words in Korean. The fact that he had a girlfriend, who was a White Canadian, made Geonyoung feel more comfortable.

On the other hand, another man she met came from an Indian background (the man mentioned in Excerpt 4.8). He approached her in a club. While saying that he had taught English in Japan, he first suggested language exchange with Geonyoung after asking if she had come to Toronto to study English. Geonyoung first made it clear to him that she had a boyfriend. Hearing that he had graduated from the University of Toronto and was working as a manager at a large franchise drug store, she thought that he would be different from other men, or “perverts” in Jiyoung’s words. However, after a couple of meetings with them, she recognized that his purpose of language exchange with her was not for intercultural exchange but for dating. Thus, Geonyoung cut off contact with this person and avoided him.
The gendered access to language exchange has consequences for both Korean male and female students. Excluding from the opportunity of language exchange, Korean male students are more likely to feel isolated from the host country’s social networks and are driven to form an enclave with other Asians, particularly, Korean male students. On the other hand, although most of the Korean female students I spoke with said that they had at least one or two Canadian male friends, it is not the case that they blindly succumbed to the gaze of local men. Rather, they weighed up the opportunity to speak and learn with native speakers of English against the loss of their sexual agency. Furthermore, their relationship with local men possibly made them targets of the discourse regarding “cheap girls.” Therefore, Korean female students usually establish a limit within which they allow for the mobilization of their sexuality, and retreat from the process of language exchange when local men show an attempt to cross the limit.

4.3 Volunteer work: Labored access and language barrier

As a metropolitan city, Toronto has a relatively large number of opportunities to do volunteer work. Korean students imagine that by doing volunteer works, they can have opportunities to practice English, meet locals, and if possible, make local friends. Although the large number of volunteer works are one benefit of studying English in Toronto for Korean learners, the types and qualities of volunteer work available to temporary visitors do not satisfy their expectations. First of all, most volunteer works in the Toronto areas are connected with one-time and seasonal festivals and local events such as Pride Toronto Festival (June), Scotia Bank Busker Fest (August), Toronto Zombie Work (October), and the Toronto Christmas Market (December). This means that encounters with other volunteers are equally transient and superficial. As Jiyoung stated, “I participated in volunteer work to make a Canadian friend. But all the meetings with them were one-time. It was just for volunteering. I could not make a friend and just exchanged some words” (Interview, January 2014). Moreover, the works which altruist organizations ask for ESL students to volunteer for are not language heavy tasks that require high language proficiency but rather manual or physical tasks. For example, my informants were asked to sell tickets at sporting events, move equipment and boxes, and
help attendees or visitors with directions at event venues. These works usually do not require a wide range of language registers. Lastly, as some English study abroad agencies and language institutes begin to see volunteering as a way of experiential learning, these agencies and institutes are introducing these kinds of opportunities to their clients. To encourage students to participate, some institutes issue a document of certification when their students meet a specified time of participation and completion in volunteer work. The intervention of educational institutes in the local volunteering market has reshaped the demography of participants. Therefore, at certain events, ESL students account for the majority of the volunteer labor force.

However, the limitations of volunteer work with regards to networking with locals do not remain as the issue of institutional constraints. Korean students’ experiences of volunteering illuminate that there is also a linguistic constraint which is imposed on them. In other words, even when Korean learners engage in an interaction with locals in volunteer events, they are not often allowed to participate in the interaction as a legitimate interlocutor. The invisibility in interaction primarily stems from language barriers that exist between ESL learners’ limited level of English proficiency and locals’ colloquial and culturally embedded usage of English.

Dongil, a key informant, was one of the Korean students who actively searched for volunteer work. He was exceptional in the sense that, as opposed to other Korean students who depended on their agencies in searching for volunteer opportunities, he initatively navigated them by consulting a website called Volunteer Toronto (http://www.volunteertoronto.ca). It offered him opportunities that other ESL students could not find or that local Torontonians were only present. However, even after he finally got into a language community of native English speakers, he felt intimidated by the situation, because colloquial forms of native speaker’s English were dominantly spoken. Dongil described the experience:

Excerpt 4.11: Interview with Dongil (August 2013)
Dongil: Outside of the school, the wall is massive, really. Even when I went to volunteer, I couldn’t communicate. I went to an orientation session and found no ESL students and only people who had lived more than ten years at the minimum. They understood what each was saying even though their accents were strange. It was not the issue of speaking naturally. The
language itself was different. I mean, something unfamiliar, it was not a
difficult word but speaking unfamiliarly by adding something like
prepositions, in ways like something “out,” something “on.” I couldn’t get
it. I was just thinking what the heck they’re talking about. This is the wall.

Through the experience of volunteer work, Dongil was able to tell the difference
between the forms of English that were being spoken in and out of the school. From
Dongil’s perspective, the difference did not lie in the issue of accents or acceptability of
expression. Rather, he perceived the English spoken in that setting as “a different
language.” This sort of English was typified as colloquial, using phrasal verbs and
idioms. In another talk, Dongil even characterized English out of the school as the quality
of voice: murmuring, unclear, and rapid (Field note, August 23, 2013). As only Dongil
could not understand what other volunteers were talking, he was excluded from
participation in conversations. The language barrier was “the wall” that Dongil faced
even when he successfully accessed a language community of native speakers.

The language barrier that Dongil experienced aroused ambivalence about doing
volunteer work. He applied for a serious of volunteer positions with the aspiration of
meeting native English speakers, having believed that in comparison to taking courses at
school or studying English in libraries, volunteer work would benefit him better.
However, after experiencing language barriers in volunteer works, when he found, in the
job description and/or during the job orientation process, that a requirement of a
volunteer position was “good communication skills,” he dropped the position or did not
attend the event. Dongil’s experience indicates that when native speakers do not care
about the interlocutors’ language proficiency, access to their language communities does
not guarantee the activation of and participation in communicative acts. Korean learners
are positioned as linguistically invisible, so that intersubjectivity, which is an important
element of communication, is inactivated. Thus, they simply eavesdrop on local peoples’
conversations or just leave the scene.
5.1 Valuing non-native English speakers

The fact that Korean students initially strive to become engaged within communities of native speakers does not mean that they completely ignore the presence of non-native English speakers that they encounter every day, including homestay families or classmates at school. Although non-native speakers are seen as inauthentic in the hierarchical order of English capital, Korean learners assign a utilitarian value to them. Despite “accented” and “deficient” forms of English, they are interlocutors with whom Korean learners can practice their oral English. To put it simply, as one informant said, “they (NNES friends) are better than nothing.”

However, as Korean learners usually fail to access language communities of native speakers as a result of locals’ stereotyping gaze and Korean learners’ limited English proficiency, they come to give more credibility to their NNES friends as interlocutors. Opposed to NES locals who make them hypervisible or invisible, NNES friends, for example, classmates and homestay families, are most accessible and accommodating interlocutors in the social network of Korean learners in Toronto. In particular, Korean learners recognize that a reciprocal or mutual relation in communication, based on emotional supports such as empathy, is a fundamental element that enables an act of communication to occur and proceed. Although Korean study abroad learners expect that authentic speakers show such affective responses, they concede that they are more likely to establish and develop a mutually equal relationship with non-native speakers. Geonyoung, for example, felt more comfortable speaking English to classmates or homestay families, as they looked welcoming her. She said, “Filipino/as treat me very well. Canadians are yabakhada (cold-hearted)” (Field note, August 1, 2013). Her comment, as well as other informants’ evaluation of Filipino/a homestay, illuminates how this “inauthentic” language community can exist in the hierarchical market of English. In a sense, this is a niche market as it offers mutuality and intimacy in communication (e.g., the willingness to communicate with Korean learners, emotional care about their limited language proficiency, and shared Asian values), instead of authorizing (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) linguistic or cultural authenticity.
Filipino/a homestay families may be seen as language service workers for Korean learners-customers who have the expectation that Filipino/as are more kind, generous and considerate than local White native speakers.

In valuing non-native speakers, however, Korean learners tend to manage their lack of linguistic authenticity by stratifying them through perceived levels of English proficiency. Namely, Korean students are willing to communicate with non-native English speakers with a perceived high level of language proficiency. The compromise of the inauthenticity of non-native English interlocutors with their language proficiency is revealed in the following talk between Insung and me:

Excerpt 4.12: Interview with Insung (July 2013)
In Chull: What is the best way to learn English in Toronto? What do you think? What is the best way?
Insung: Of course, talking with native speakers. ((laugh))
In Chull: But you may know it's very hard to meet native speakers.
Insung: ((loud laugh)) yeah
In Chull: And Toronto is a very multicultural city. So most of the people are not native speakers. Most of the people have accents.
Insung: But it is also, it's enough to talk with people who are fairly good at English and good at speaking. I can have chances to speak English, I can get myself more familiar with English speaking, and I can learn English from such speakers. But usually, native speakers don’t want to talk with people who cannot speak English well.

Insung thinks that the best way to learn English is to meet and talk with native speakers. When I say that it can be tough to do so, he agrees with my point. When I try to frame the difficulty as not Insung’s fault but rather the multiculturalism of Toronto, Insung shows that as he cannot meet native speakers, his realistic goal is to talk with English interlocutors who are more proficient. This is beneficial for Insung because he can practice English speaking and embody English speaking (“get myself familiar with English speaking”), as well as learn from them. Insung also confirms that native English speakers tend to show an unwillingness to communicate with non-native English speakers. Insung’s account suggests that the stratification of English speakers is made not only between native and non-native speakers, but also within the groups of non-native English speakers along the hierarchical lines of English proficiency.
Essentially, what Korean students mean by “good” English and “more proficient” English is not objective but interpretive and evaluative. In the evaluative process, not only the dominant language ideology (i.e., “living” English) but also cultural and ethnic stereotypes of NNES interlocutors come into play. In the next section, I will examine in more detail how Korean students establish a linguistic order of non-native English interlocutors at school, namely, their classmates. They are English speakers who take a significant proportion in Korean students’ social networks.

5.2 Linguistic stratification of classmates: Latin Americans, East Asians, and Middle Easterners

At Lingua City, East Asians (Korea, Japan, Taiwan), Middle Easterners (Saudi Arabia), and Latin Americans (Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela) accounted for the majority of the student population. Among them, Koreans, Japanese, Saudi Arabians, and Brazilians were the four largest national groups (Introduction). In such a national or ethnic composition of classmates, South Korean students tend to initially perceive Latin American students as better English speakers because of their “less accented” English and oral fluency. Koreans believe that their “good” oral proficiency comes from linguistic similarities (i.e., phonology, syntax, and lexicon) between English and their mother tongues (i.e., Spanish or Portuguese). On the other hand, Korean learners tend to see East Asian students as good at English grammar and reading but relatively bad at speaking. Middle Eastern students are seen as bad at English overall; for example, “even some students could not read a single sentence” (Field note, May 9, 2013) and “they don’t know basic grammar” (Field note, June 11, 2013).

Such a general hierarchical order of classmates made by Korean students is clearly revealed in their evaluation of the English accents their classmates at school have. This linguistic feature is not only most distinguishable in terms of the variety of English that they hear, but also *iconized* (Irvine & Gal, 2000) or *accented* (Blommaert, 2013; Blommaert & Varis, 2013) with ethnicities in the construction of language ideology (cf. Lippi-Green, 2012). Thus, Korean learners’ evaluation of English accents serves as a yardstick for determining whether a certain interlocutor is communicable or not. Similar
to the general impression regarding the English abilities of the major ethnic groups at school, Korean learners hierarchically order the preferred English accents of their classmates. They tend to view English with a Latin American accent as closest to that of a native English speaker, even if they sometimes hear distinctive phonemic features influenced by their first languages. Therefore, Korean learners usually do not think that Latin American accents prevent the flow of communication or lead misunderstandings. In contrast, Japanese accents and Saudi Arabian accents are taken as “strong” or “unique” enough to provoke annoyance in the course of communicating with them, or as “inaudible” enough to hinder communication. The following excerpt first shows an example of how a Korean student sees English spoken with a Japanese accent:

Excerpt 4.13: Interview with Dongil (August 2013)
Dongil: Japanese pronunciations are “good-bye” pronunciations. Their pronunciations go far away. (laugh) (…) I’m not saying they do not have good English competence. I just wondered how come all of the Japanese students pronounce English words that way. Girls are pretty okay, but Japanese guys have unique Japanese accents, affected by Katakana pronunciations. “Excuse me” is pronounced like ((mocking Japanese English)) “ekssükkujümī.” It is too salient.

As Dongil could speak Japanese to some level, he had some Japanese friends as part of his social network. He valued his Japanese friends as English-speaking interlocutors, as otherwise, he would have hung out with Koreans, which he thought was the worst case. As shown in the above excerpt, however, for Dongil, English pronunciations by his Japanese friends, in particular, the male Japanese, sounds totally non-native because their pronunciation is considerably influenced by the Japanese language. Moreover, Dongil seems to think that Japanese accents cannot be overcome as long as they appear even in frequently used expressions such as “excuse me.” In another talk, Dongil said that, although such strong accents did not cause a communication breakdown, he often felt unwilling to communicate with them in English since their accents were too noticeable and provoked a sort of annoyance (Conversation between Dongil and Junghyuk, September 2013).

The evaluation of English spoken with Middle Eastern accents is more blatant; it is incomprehensible and, in turn, incommunicable. As a result, despite the high percent of
Middle Eastern students at the school, Geonyoung, as well as other Korean informants, did not consider them to be good English-speaking interlocutors. They were invisible in Korean students’ social networks. She explained why this was happening:

Excerpt 4.14: Interview with Geonyoung (July 2013)
Geonyoung: They tend to hang out only with their ethnic friends. Of course, some of them get along with South American guys. Is this because their chŏngsŏ (sentiment) doesn’t fit with Koreans sentiment? After all, I couldn’t get their pronunciations. Unless they are quite proficient, I couldn’t get what they’re saying. As I don’t know what they’re saying, I am just out of it. Once one understands what the other is saying, they can communicate, share interests, and talk about personal stories. But I cannot make this happen with Saudi Arabian students.

Geonyoung seems to attribute the exclusion of Saudi Arabian students to their strong ethnic membership and the intercultural differences between them and Koreans. However, the primary reason that Geonyoung thinks (“first of all”) is the Middle Eastern pronunciations of English; she could not understand their pronunciations and was, therefore, unable to comprehend what they were saying. Consequently, the strong accents in their English lead to failures and difficulties in communication, which demotivates Korean students to build social relationships with people of Middle Eastern accents.

The ordering of non-native English-speaking interlocutors carried out by Korean learners shows that, when non-native English speakers are presented as alternative interlocutors in the English study abroad context, they do not evaluate them as equally valuable resources of English learning. Rather, they voluntarily and involuntarily construct the order of desirable types of English-speaking interlocutors by referring to the perceived levels of English proficiency or the perceived degree of accents in their English. In the process, it may be argued that Korean young adults linguistically stereotype non-native English speakers in the very way that they are stereotyped by locals. The visibility of various ethnic groups of classmates as communicable interlocutors differs; Latin American students are established as the most visible and preferable, Middle Eastern students as the least, and East Asian students as in between. Such ideological constructions affect Korean learners’ choice of classes and participation in social gatherings. However, as seen in the previous sections, the stratification of non-
native English speakers is similarly subject to contradictions and negotiations. Especially, the establishment of the above linguistic order works significantly in the early stage of English study abroad, when Korean learners begin to meet a variety of English speakers. However, the maintained contacts with various ethnic groups of classmates develop, rather than simply perpetuate, not only linguistic stereotypes but also cultural stereotypes, which get entangled with the criteria of “good” English speakers.

5.3 Entangled linguistic order: Cultural stereotypes and linguistic deficit

As Korean students get to spend more time at Lingua City, their continual intercultural experiences with different ethnic groups of students allow them to sediment cultural characteristics of each ethnic group and form locally constructed stereotypes. These construed stereotypes affect the linguistic order of non-native English-speaking interlocutors, already built by Korean learners. The stereotypes result from Korean learners’ interpretation of lifestyles, learning habits, and the historical and cultural rituals of other ethnic groups. What follows is a look at the stereotypes of Latin American, Middle Eastern (Saudi Arabian) and East Asian (Japanese) students, constructed by Korean students at Lingua City.\(^{21}\)

Latin American students, who are considered the most fluent English speakers at school, are stereotyped as students who prefer to play rather than study in Toronto, as Korean learners witness Latin American students’ hedonic lifestyles. They are, above all, passionate partygoers. They invite any sort of classmates, including Koreans, to leisure events such as house parties or clubbing, and initially, Korean students are glad to join these events because they believe that they can use English with non-Korean learners and experience cosmopolitan enjoyment (Chapter 7). Before long, Korean students begin to bear a burden of frequently going to parties or clubs, since they worry about the cost and aftermaths on English learning. Among Korean students, the greater engagement with

---

\(^{21}\) These narratives are based on Korean students’ interviews and accounts on each group of classmates, supplemented by the interviews of secondary participants and my observations on classes and social interactions at school. I refer to Reyes (2009) for the notion of stereotype and the analytic methods. In Reyes’s term, the stereotypes formed by Korean students are a sort of \textit{local typification}. Interestingly, the stereotypes are circulated not only within the community of Korean students, but also in other ethnic groups of students and the faculty and staff of the school. It suggests that the stereotypes may work as \textit{widespread typification}. 
playing than studying causes a feeling of guilt, as their dominant perception of English study abroad lies much more on studying than on leisure (Chapter 2). Such affects are exacerbated when they are absent or cannot complete assignments the day after a party or club night. Also, the difference in the focus of English study abroad between Latin American and Korean students brings out different attitudes toward class. Korean students tend to study hard, in particular, complete assignments and prepare for quizzes and tests, whereas Latin American students tend to be active only during class. The latter talks a lot in class, but their topics are sometimes irrelevant or simply joking, as well as they take little care of assignments and tests. These habits of studying strengthen the stereotype of Latin American students as those who are playful and ludic, but not sincere and academic. Moreover, Latin Americans’ open-mindedness in sexuality and their everyday customs such as hugs, cheek kisses and even flirting, in particular, made by male students, function as another intercultural burden that Korean students face when hanging out with them (cf. Schneider, 2014).

The cultural stereotype of Middle Eastern classmates that Korean learners form is that they are demotivated students. They are viewed as learners who are not interested in class and are frequently absent. In most cases, most of the Korean learners at Lingua City do not know how Middle Eastern classmates live outside of school as they do not usually build a relationship with each other. However, Korean learners assume that Middle Eastern students’ lack of passion toward English learning may be attributable to their source of funding. In contrast with Koreans who self-fund their English study abroad, Saudi Arabian students are granted tuition and a stipend for their overseas study by the government. Korean learners tend to think that Saudi Arabian students are not likely to have responsibilities connected to their English learning as the cost of English study abroad does not come from their individual pockets. Rather, Saudi Arabian students, they believe, are more interested in experiencing Western culture, some of which is not allowed in their home country. They are also perceived as consuming brands with “oil money.” Their fashion often embroidered with luxurious items, frequent absenteeism, and dozing in class, all solidify Korean students’ perception of them as “bad” English speakers and “bad” students, contributing to maintaining their invisibility in Korean students’ social network.
On the other hand, East Asian students are recognized by Korean students as comfortable interlocutors, as Korean learners find that cultural affinities among East Asians facilitate communication. Although East Asians speak English less fluently and with stronger accents than Latin American students do, Korean students realize that the knowledge of the regional traditions and cultures not only lowers the psychological burden of intercultural exchanges, but also offers shared topics that help to initiate communication and fills information gaps in communication. Thus, Korean students say that they can have more fun and rich communication with Japanese students. Moreover, the similar orientation to English study abroad (study more than leisure), which is based on the fact that English is an important qualification for employment, or linguistic instrumentalism (Kubota, 2011b), and the similar English study abroad market strategies (e.g., the important role of agencies and a longer period of stay) help to cement this friendship.

The cultural stereotypes regarding the ethnic makeup of classmates inform Korean learners that their linguistic order may not be straightforward. Latin American students are linguistically preferable, but are not culturally so. The reverse is Korean students’ evaluation of East Asian students. They are linguistically dismissed but culturally appreciated. However, Middle Eastern students still remain on the lowest order, linguistically and culturally.

What makes this picture more complicated is Korean students’ enhanced degree of sensitivity to forms and patterns of English employed by various ethnic groups, which has developed as a consequence of the prolonged exposure to their English. Importantly, this awareness leads Korean students to confirm the normativity of native English speakers; whatever their nationalities or linguistic backgrounds are, their ESL classmates are non-native speakers, so that their English is not perfect. This has the more obvious consequence for the reassessment of Latin American English, which Korean learners saw as the most akin to English of native speakers. For instance, Korean students become aware of linguistic “errors” that they could not recognize before. Although Korean learners still appreciate the English fluency of students from Latin American backgrounds, they discover that this group of students often put words from their first languages into English utterances—a kind of intrasentential code-switching. The
syntactic consistency and phonological similarity between English and their first languages originally contributed to masking such linguistic performances from Korean students. However, eventually, Korean students figure out how Latin American classmates speak English, and begin to rethink whether they are “good” English interlocutors or not. To illustrate, Dongil stated:

Excerpt 4.15: Conversation with Dongil and Insung (July 2013)
Dongil: At first, Latin guys (students from Latin America) looked like good at English speaking because they just popped out English. But as I have been learning English at school, now I don’t think like that. As you know, if you can meet, Canadians are much better at English. Their English is perfect. I come to realize that their (Latin American students’) English is not good. They just say something in English.

Dongil demonstrates the way in which he evaluates various forms of English that he has come to hear in Toronto. He claims that Canadians’ English is the best—“it’s perfect.” Like other Korean students, Dongil at first supposed that English spoken by Latin American students in the school was better than English used by Asian students, particularly, Koreans, the Japanese, and Saudi Arabians. However, as he improved his sensitivity to various types of English as well as his English competence, he came to realize that the English spoken by students from European linguistic backgrounds was not accurate; they simply speak out English words. Alternatively, as he said later in this conversation, “Latin American friends often use grammatically wrong English and sneakily put Portuguese or Spanish words in their English sentence. But they sound like English.” It is evident that his defining norm of “good” English remains based on native speakers.

In the end, Korean learners’ linguistic order is entangled. Cultural stereotypes that Korean students form through their locally situated experiences and the awareness of NNES linguistic deficits make them realign the criteria of who are better interlocutors. In a sense, Korean learners face a situation that any group of non-native English speakers or classmates has both advantages and disadvantages as interlocutors. This is a paradox; as Korean students stay longer in an English study abroad context, their “folk” theory of English proficiency—who are “good” English speakers—has developed, and the
linguistic order has gotten entangled. The first layer of linguistic order firmly remains on native speakerism, but multiculturalism at Lingua City and in Toronto makes the second layer of linguistic order locally situated and contextually varied. Under such situations, while reaffirming the ideology of English in study abroad, Korean transnational learners attempt to deal with the entanglement of their constructed linguistic order by searching for what I would like to call *pedagogical speakers*.

5.4 Disentangling linguistic order: Pedagogical speakers

As Korean students’ social networks mostly rely on NNES friends and the established linguistic order is complicated, they need to recalibrate features of “ideal” interlocutors. Especially, their concern is primarily about the quality of communication with their NNES friends, as they are aware that English used by ESL learners is not only less accurate and fluent, but also has limited width and depth. This concern is voiced particularly when the speakers have levels of English proficiency similar or lower to those of the Korean learners. They reported that their classmates seemed to repeat the same patterns of conversation and use a limited set of expressions. They also said that “broken” and “accented” English was contagious, as they found themselves imitating “unnatural” or “non-native” usage and pronunciations that their NNES counterparts were using in the course of communications. One Korean informant described this disappointment as the expression that his grammar system was collapsing (*munbŏbi munŏjinŭn nŭkkim*) (Field note, May 6, 2013). As this situation is not satisfactory, challenging and motivating to their English learning, Korean students are often concerned about a plateau of learning. As a result, they begin to value English-speaking interlocutors who offer pedagogical resources, whether they are native or non-native.

For sure, the typical figure of pedagogical speakers is language teachers, who do the pedagogical works such as the creation of a “comfort zone” and the provision of feedback in class. Thus, Korean students stress the qualities of language teachers’ teaching styles, performances, and even their characters, in choosing language educational commodities (Chapter 5). Also, this is the reason that the importance of language school is not diminished despite immersion discourse in language study abroad.
Furthermore, Korean young adults project the relationship between teachers and students to other English-speaking interlocutors, including NNES friends. What they deeply appreciate among pedagogical resources offered by English-speaking interlocutors is linguistic feedback. They regard feedback as a valuable help to correct inappropriate and unnatural English usage and accents and enrich their repertoires of English expressions, thus contributing to overcoming the learning plateau. Moreover, as the Korean learners believe that the quality of an interlocutor’s feedback depends on his or her English proficiency, the linguistic hierarchy of English speakers becomes realigned with the quality of feedback. For instance, Taehwan viewed Dongil as the friend who substantially helped to improve his English ability, because Dongil “fixed” his English:

Excerpt 4.16: Conversation with Taehwan (November 2013)
Taehwan: Dongil was the only Korean whom I met. When I met Dongil, we communicated in English. Dongil spoke English very well, so it helped me. Usually, when I met other Koreans, I had to speak Korean. (…) Dongil was always with guys from Japan or other countries. When I hanged out with Dongil and Michael, a Taiwanese, Dongil often listened to my English, and said, “Umm…it sounds unnatural. In this case, you should have said like this.” He pointed out my English.

For Taehwan, Dongil was the only Korean with whom he built a friendship. Taehwan did not want to meet and form a relationship with Koreans because he viewed a Korean community as a barrier to English learning. However, Dongil was different not only because he spoke to Taehwan in English, but also because he offered feedback on Taehwan’s English. Taehwan assigns a role of the pedagogical speaker to Dongil by legitimizing his English proficiency (“Dongil spoke English very well”). Dongil’s English ability is further substantiated by Taehwan’s awareness that Dongil’s social networks were dominated by non-Korean classmates.

The association of the provision and quality of feedback with the evidence of language proficiency is not confined to relationships with non-native English speakers. Korean students take feedback from native English speakers as the most reliable, authentic and valuable, thus confirming the authority of native English speakers. Taehwan appreciated feedback from his Canadian friend, who was living in Ottawa:
Excerpt 4.17: Conversation with Taehwan (January 2014)
Taehwan: I learned many English expressions while staying in Ottawa. Even having a meal, he pointed out my pronunciations. He also taught me expressions like “sleep on” or “beat it.” He was like Dongil. He also pinpointed my English words and expressions. I appreciated him.

During his New Year holidays, Taehwan visited his Canadian friend who lived in Ottawa. Taehwan met this native English-speaking friend in his hometown in South Korea prior to his English study abroad. However, Taehwan could not frequently meet him because of the distance from Toronto to his friend’s home. In the above excerpt, Taehwan mentions that on one particular visit, he learned English a lot because his friend pointed out his non-native English pronunciations and taught several colloquial expressions. Linking to what Dongil performed before, Taehwan appreciated his friend’s feedback—it was a resourceful and valuable experience for his English learning.

Whether native or non-native, English speakers whose language proficiency is higher than a Korean learner can be considered as a pedagogical speaker if they are willing not only to communicate, but also to pinpoint errors and “teach” English. However, it is not easy to find or maintain a relationship with this type of speakers, as the willingness to provide feedback or to be pedagogically minded basically depends on not only Korean students’ desire but also their counterpart’s willingness to participate as such an interlocutor. In most cases, their friends are not teachers. As such, some Korean learners who desire to have a reliable pedagogical interlocutor search for tutors. Among informants, Insung and Seulki studied English with private tutors in their later stage of English study abroad, when their language school programs were complete.

Korean students who learn English with tutors pay an hourly fee to tutors who are native speakers and have conversations with them. As textbooks or materials are not usually prepared, they mostly have an informal conversation regarding their everyday life or affairs in Toronto or South Korea. In the course of chatting, tutors give feedback on students’ English, such as paraphrasing, rewording, finding an appropriate word, and pronunciation. Even though they are native speakers, they do not marginalize Korean learners in such ways as other native speakers do in other naturalistic settings (e.g., language exchange or volunteer work). Tutoring is a sort of comfort zone for Korean English learners. In this arrangement, learners being offered pedagogical feedback are
highly satisfied with the service even though this costs extra money from their English study abroad budget. Recently, as a result of students showing an increased demand for private lessons and differentiated feedback, existing language schools in Toronto are incorporating tutoring systems into their programs. Similarly, new language institutes specializing in tutoring are newly opening as well.

6 Conclusion

This chapter has traced the processes in which Korean students stratify English speakers that they encounter in multilingual Toronto. Although their norm of reference is maintained on native speaker’s English, their practices of the search for authentic speakers need to be mindfully negotiated, as multiple sets of institutional and discursive constraints are at play. In opposition to their initial determination, Korean English study abroad students usually fail not only in avoiding Korean communities, but also in engaging local communities of native English speakers, due to their concerns over national backlash by other Koreans and ethnic/racial/linguistic stereotypes by local Torontonians, respectively. The difficulties with managing the two bounded language communities lead Korean students to reevaluate non-native English speakers. However, as Korean students construct the linguistic order and cultural stereotypes of the speakers that they come across in everyday life and contact, they confront entangled and ambiguous criteria for “good” English speakers. One way of disentangling these criteria is to search for English speakers who are believed to help them overcome their language deficits by offering pedagogical resources such as feedback.

Such trajectories of the stratification of English speakers show that, as Korean students’ English study abroad unfolds, they value not only authenticity but also emotions, social relations, and pedagogy as resources for their English learning. The key question for them is where are the spaces of language where these elements exist. In other words, they should create the cartography of language (Park, 2014) by navigating the resources and values of English communication. However, it is highly difficult to find the space where all of the three recourses for communication are offered. Language communities of local native English speakers have authenticity but lack emotional and
pedagogical supports, whereas language communities of non-native English speakers have emotional resources but lack the components of authenticity and pedagogy. On the part of language learners, therefore, the management of English speakers takes the shape of distribution and focus. For example, locals are viewed as authentic input providers, classmates as mutual interlocutors, and teachers as pedagogical interlocutors. The division of language labor and spaces informs us that language learners have different expectations of linguistic resources and values from different language communities and speakers (cf. Urciuoli, 1996, 2009).

In this process, stakeholders in the English language industry mobilize these three resources valued by learners. For instance, new niche markets open up (e.g., Filipino/a homestay, tutoring), and existing markets specialize in certain parts in their programs. In such circumstances, language learners readily turn their eyes to private education markets, when they find that they cannot obtain all or a part of authenticity, emotional affordance, and pedagogical supports of communication in immersed contexts. Therefore, as Korean learners stay longer in Toronto, they are more likely to lean to language education markets than local speech communities, and are more strongly positioned as language educational consumers than “adventurer” subjects (Doerr, 2012). The next chapter will examine how Korean learners evaluate language commodities offered by language schools in order to secure more valuable learning opportunities.
CHAPTER FIVE
CLASS “SHOPPING” IN LEARNER-CENTERED SCHOOL:
NAVIGATING LANGUAGE COMMODITIES IN THE ELT INDUSTRY

1 Introduction

In the first week of each session, enrolled students at Lingua City line up on the main floor of the school building, where offices of the dean, the manager, directors, and other staff members, as well as the reception, are located. The floor is packed with students at lunchtime and after the last class. Their line-up goes along the desks of academic directors, whose main job is to develop curricular and teaching materials for teachers. However, in the first week, they cannot focus on their work, because they need to do another job for students: to consult with students about class choice and permit them to audit and change courses. In spite of such a bustling atmosphere during the first week, it seems that directors and teachers accept students’ high demands for class audits and changes, largely because they are part of the school’s policies; class audits and changes are officially allowed if students find that an initially selected class does not satisfy their academic needs. However, at the same time, teachers and directors take a critical view of students’ behavior of class audits and changes. Robin, a teacher of a Business English listening class, told me that teachers called it “shopping.” Their term, “shopping,” poignantly captures a consumerist aspect of the students in the private educational sector. This chapter, thus, will delve into students’ class “shopping” – their patterns of navigating and choosing language commodities at school. This is another key strategy that Korean students employ in order to improve their oral English proficiency and maximize their educational investment.

This chapter intends to reveal how a site of language education is associated with the consumer culture, rather than to claim that it is “contaminated” with consumerism or that students’ consumerism is problematic. For this purpose, I will attend to students’ choices of courses and programs, as the key characteristic of consumer culture is understood as the practice of making “rational” choices among a variety of commodities (Bauman, 2007; Lury, 2011). In or through the practice of choice, consumers establish
and apply a set of criteria that define the meanings of commodities, and justify and legitimate the choice (Lury, 2011; Shankar, 2006, 2008).

The criteria of class choice that Korean students establish and mobilize at school revolve around the expected types of English that they can acquire by taking classes. Generally, Korean learners navigate between two types of English: human interaction and English certificates. However, as with other cultural and linguistic practices, Korean students’ criteria of choice are by no means stable and straightforward. Rather, as they confront a discrepancy between their expectation and experience of the chosen classes, they continually navigate various language educational commodities available to them and constantly calculate the values of the language commodities. Usually, the first tension they experience comes from dissatisfaction with the low-intermediate communicative English program that they take in the early period of their English study abroad. They are discontent that the courses do not fulfill their needs for verbal interactions in English. In response, students’ class choice is mediated not only by the desired types of English, but also by the evaluations of other metalinguistic components, such as who teaches it in what ways and what kinds of certificates programs offer upon successful completion. I will call the first case “teacher shopping” and the latter “certificate shopping.” In this chapter, I aim to examine how Korean students make sense of the two types of class “shopping” to make “rational” choices in their educational investment and justify their choices – a process of (re)signification that creates a consumer culture in the market-oriented language market.

2 Targeting two language commodities in diverse programs: Human interaction and English certificates

2.1 The first choice: Communicative English program

Every Monday morning, the school is busy welcoming new students. The school administers a placement test and holds an orientation session in a rented auditorium in a nearby building. New students take a written English test assessing their proficiency levels in reading and listening, and then move on to participate in the orientation. While the dean is introducing the school’s policies and guidelines to all of the students, several
teachers at the back of the auditorium have oral tests with individual students for five to ten minutes. It follows that the teacher determines the student’s general proficiency level, referring to the result of the written test. Finally, the teacher consults with the student about his/her first choice of courses at school, in order to offer the “most suitable” ones on the basis of the student’s English level and needs. The teacher shows the student a long list of programs and courses.

In fact, one of the marketing points that Lingua City promotes is the diversity and specification of English programs and courses (Chapter 2). The school provides a variety of language programs, including Communicative English, Academic English, Business English, Test Preparation English, and so forth. Within the programs are different courses specified by focused content and available proficiency levels. For instance, the Communicative English program provides courses ranging from basic to advanced proficiency levels, whereas the Test Preparation program includes TOEIC, TOEFL, IELTS, and Cambridge English courses. When students complete a course requirement of a single program, they are offered a program certificate issued by the school.

Furthermore, courses within the programs are divided into “core” and “optional” courses. Morning courses (9:00 am – 12:00 pm) are termed “core” courses as they not only cover the general content of a target program, but the teachers also take responsibility for assessing students’ achievements and determining their levels of English proficiency at the end of the courses. On the other hand, afternoon courses are termed “optional” courses as students can choose more specific learning areas according to their needs. Students have two classes in the afternoon (one from 1:00 – 2:30 pm, the other from 2:45 – 4:00 pm). Table 5.1 is a shortened version of the school’s list of programs and courses. In fact, Lingua City advertises on its website that it offers more than 100 courses and programs with brief descriptions of learning goals and content. It also distributes a course selection table one week before each session starts, detailing what courses are offered and in what proficiency levels students are allowed to take them, and with the table, students make their class plans for the next session.
Table 5.1

List of Programs and Courses at Lingua City (abbreviated)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programs</th>
<th>Core courses (One morning class)</th>
<th>Optional courses (Two afternoon classes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicative English</td>
<td>From Beginner to Advanced</td>
<td>Conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic English</td>
<td>From Beginner to Advanced</td>
<td>Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business English</td>
<td>Global Business</td>
<td>Business Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English for Business Communication</td>
<td>Business Presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Business Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities English</td>
<td>Global Issues</td>
<td>Film</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Photography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Colloquial English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test Preparation English</td>
<td>IELTS</td>
<td>IELTS Speaking &amp; Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOEFL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cambridge English</td>
<td>TOEIC Speaking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The school’s system of offering diverse courses and programs is based on its educational belief of being “learner-centered.” In the school’s promotional materials such as in their brochure, on their website, and in their orientation guidebook, it is stated that when students find courses personally interesting, they are motivated to learn and result in better learning outcomes. The “learner-centered” school seeks to meet students’ learning interests and satisfy students’ needs by offering various sets of courses and programs.

In spite of such a long and complex list of programs and courses, my Korean student informants said that their choice of programs and courses for the first session was quite straightforward. Among them, they decided to take the Communicative English program as a core course, as they were aiming to improve their oral fluency in English (Chapter 3). They expected that the program would “offer a number of opportunities for oral interactions” (Interview with Dongil, July 2013). Based on the improved proficiency of general oral skills in English, they planned to move later to certificate English programs such as Business English or to the Internship program in order to add value and
work experience to their English study abroad. This learning path is actually what almost all of the English study abroad agents recommend to their client students, as a way to make most of their English study abroad. In contrast, the Korean students did not consider the Academic English program or Test Preparation program as their first choice, as the expected learning content and methods did not seem to be distinguishable from what they had learned in South Korea (Chapter 3).

2.2 Dissatisfaction with low-intermediate communicative courses

Because of their initial language proficiency, most of the Korean students who decided to take the Communicative English program were assigned to low-intermediate courses. However, it did not take very long for Korean students to be disappointed with the Communicative English program and navigate other programs. Their disappointment mostly stemmed from the fact that they did not feel their English fluency was significantly improving in low-intermediate communicative English courses. They reported that communicative English courses in their early period merely helped them to adapt to a new school environment and to build their initial social network in Toronto.

They reasoned that their negative evaluation of low-intermediate communicative English courses was rooted in the repeated and patterned interaction in the class. Furthermore, they thought that the patterned interaction was partially a result of teaching grammar in the communicative courses. Korean students spoke about their experiences of communicative English courses in the early stage of their studies as follows:

- “They taught grammar, and we just practiced conversation using it. We complained that we had to learn grammar in communicative English courses.” (Geonyoung, Interview, October 2013)
- “The Communicative English program is not ‘good’ because similar things are taught every day. Something like present perfect. It seems that the class works in a similar pattern.” (Hyunjin, Group interview, November 2013)
- “English is not improved in communicative English courses. What’s worse, it’s not fun. We just repeat the same words.” (Dongil, Interview, July 2013)
Korean students did not think that learning grammar was totally useless. They often chose a grammar course as an optional afternoon class, as they admitted that their oral English was fragmented and grammatically awkward. Nonetheless, Korean students’ complaint here was that grammar learning took place in the “core” course of the focal program to which they should dedicate more time and effort. This was at odds with their motivation to study English abroad, as most of their English learning experiences in South Korea were form-based (e.g., grammar and vocabulary) (Chapter 3). As they felt that grammatical items were repetitive during the course, and that their classroom interactions simply involved a limited set of expressions using the grammatical structures, they often explained that communicative English classes were “boring.”

My classroom observations on low-intermediate communicative English courses might lend support to Korean students’ evaluations about the courses. For example, in her low-intermediate communicative course, Amanda taught her students communicative functions of talking about experiences (See Appendix 3). This learning content featured grammar tenses, especially past simple and present perfect. With a focus on these linguistic forms, Amanda basically created a sequence of her explanations and students’ practices, and engaged them in various types of activities and *participant structures* (Philips, 1993) to facilitate their oral practice. She gave a lecture to the whole class to introduce and review the target forms, and then gave students small-group activities to practice them. Further, students were asked to do a small-group or role-play project. In a talk on the last day of my observation, Amanda told me that according to the school’s teaching guidelines of the low-intermediate communicative English course, she should cover the grammar of the week (i.e., past simple and present perfect) and introduce another communicative function of giving advice with the topic of travel next week.

In spite of her apparently well-designed teaching strategies, the analysis of classroom interaction indicates that the majority of the classroom interaction was guided using the target language forms. In her lecture format, Amanda explained linguistic usage and rules, for example, of past simple and present perfect, and often initiated an interaction with students for confirmation:
Excerpt 5.1: Teacher-student interaction—lecture
Participants: T (Teacher, Amanda), S (male Latin American student, Daniel)

1  T: Daniel, how long have you been in Toronto?
2  S: Three months
3  T: Can you say, give me a full sentence? Do you know how to say it?
4  S: I have been here for three months?
5  T: Good. Daniel has been here for three months.

This interaction is a typical pattern of Initiation-Response-Evaluation/Feedback. Amanda asks Daniel a question using perfect present (line 1), but his response does not address the grammatical form that Amanda intends to elicit from the student (line 2). Thus, Amanda recasts her question, adding explicit instruction, “give me a full sentence” (line 3). Daniel answers her question with a rising intonation to indicate his uncertainty (line 4). Amanda evaluates the student’s answer, and recites it with the emphasis on “for,” which is another point that she is addressing in her lesson (line 5).

After the lecture on the target grammatical and communicative forms, Amanda engaged students in an activity in small groups:

Excerpt 5.2: Student-student interaction—drill in pairs
Participants: S1 (Korean female student, Yuna), S2 (Latin American female student)

1  S1: Have you ever moved to a new house or apartment recently?
2  S2: No, I have never moved to a house.
3  S1: No? OK. Have you ever had a pet bird?
4  S2: No. Have you ever swum in the ocean?
5  S1: Umm, no. I have never been, I have never swum.
6  S2: Have you ever slept in a tent?
7  S1: Tent? Umm, yes. I have slept in mountains. Have you even won many lotteries?

For this activity, Amanda distributed a sheet, which said: “Interview your classmate. Use the word provided below to ask questions using the present perfect tense.” For instance, the sentence in line 1 was constructed with words written on the activity sheet, “(move / to a new house or apartment / recently).” In this activity, the two student
interlocutors tended to repeat the pattern of questioning and yes/no responses without any elaboration.

Excerpt 5.1 and 5.2 may be characterized as form-focused, short, and simple turn-taking. To engage students in more meaningful and sustained interactions, Amanda integrated a project activity, “TV show hosting.” In this project, a pair of students were to create an event where a TV show host invites a famous guest to his or her show, and interviews the guest about his or her past experiences. The sequence of the pair activity was that they should create a script, obtain feedback on it from Amanda, practice the script, and finally give a presentation in front of the whole class. Excerpt 5.3 is an excerpt of a group’s presentation:

Excerpt 5.3: Student-student interaction—role-play presentation
Participants: T (Teacher, Amanda), S1 (Japanese female student, Asada), S2 (Korean female student, Yuna), Ss (Students, audience)
Targeted forms (underlined)

1   S1: Welcome to the dinner show. Today=
2   Ss: =(in a laughing tone)) dinner show.
3   S1: (in a laughing tone)) Today, a famous singer is coming to here. I will take these hearts. Please welcome to a famous singer, Yuna!
4   Ss: =(applaud)) Wow.
5   S2: Thank you for having me, Asada show today. Asada, your show makes me crazy. =(laugh))
6   Ss: =(laugh))
7   S1: =(laugh)) My pleasure. =(laugh)) When did you start singing?
8   S2: I started singing when I was seven years old.
9   S1: Oh, how long have you been interested in singing since your childhood?
10  S2: Yeah, I have been singing for 20 years.
11  S1: 20 years? That's amazing. By the start you were in the kindergarten, did you already sing a song?
12  S2: Yeah.
13  S1: Have you ever had to stop singing?
14  S2: Yes. I hurt my throat five years ago, so I couldn't sing, but now I do well.
15  S1: That’s good. You're, hmm, a very famous singer right now. Thank you so much for coming to Asada show.
16  S2: It's nice seeing you. Thank you for inviting me.
17  S1: Thank you, bye.
18  Ss: =(applaud))
As seen in laughter and applause between the two presenters and the other students, the atmosphere is cheerful. The audience reactions result from creative or jocular uses of English expressions (“dinner show” in line 1, “crazy” in line 5) and a presenter’s staged performance (line 3). Such a cheerful mood during this interaction may be seen as an effect of project-based learning, which aims to encourage students’ involvement and meaning-making (Sullivan, 2000). However, when it comes to the quality of interaction between the two presenters, it is structured to an interview situation where the host asks the guest about her experiences. This setting led the students to employ present perfect or simple past forms that they had been learning during the week (underlined sentences) and that they already practiced in the interview setting (Excerpt 5.2). Moreover, the interaction in this presentation may be seen as planned, as they created their scripts in advance. During the presentations, all of the students reproduced, rather than improvised, their scripts, while sneaking glances at them or even reading them. Thus, Excerpt 5.3 should be viewed as a final draft talk (Barnes, 1992, as cited in Johnson, 1995), in which “what is said and how it is said represents a sort of final presentation given mostly for teacher approval” (Johnson, 1995, p. 113).

Amanda’s lessons seem to be designed to help students gradually improve knowledge and application of “talking about experiences” in English. In spite of her efforts to engage students in various activities and participant structures, the target forms, especially present perfect, remain as main language constructs, so that students are directed to use them in planned modes in their classroom interaction.

2.3 Need for class “shopping”

An apparent failure in satisfying Korean students’ needs in the low-intermediate communicative English courses should not be seen as a failure in the curriculum design or teachers’ practices in class. Rather, it highlights the discrepancy between students’ needs and the school’s educational considerations. According to the literature of second language teaching (e.g., Brown, 2014; Brown & Lee, 2015; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Nation & Macalister, 2010; Richards & Renandya,
2013), the introduction of forms in communicative language courses is pedagogically sound. The literature highlights that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) should be designed for the integration of various language skills, and for the balance between fluency and accuracy and between meaning and form.

From the perspective of language educators, Korean students’ perception of English communicative skills as oral fluency is a partial construction. Jennifer, an academic director of the school, told me that communicative English courses at Lingua City address not only “fluency” but also “accuracy,” especially in the low-intermediate level. She admitted that Korean and Japanese students, especially, were good at grammar because of their past learning experiences, but stressed that teachers could not focus only on fluency because Latin American students, for example, appeared to be speaking fluently, but frequently committed grammatical errors. In accordance with the pedagogical approach to CLT, it is unreasonable that teachers tailor their classroom content and activities only to Korean learners’ needs. As the knowledge and performance of basic grammar and communicative functions are considered essential in successful communication, low-intermediate communicative courses should not ignore such linguistic elements, although it is advised to integrate them into a “meaningful” learning context. As Amanda did, teachers’ strategies to deal with multicultural ESL communicative courses were to create varied formats (lecture, group activity, project learning) and participant structures (the whole class and small group). Nonetheless, teachers’ efforts in making meaningful interactions in classroom settings could not fully satisfy Korean students’ needs for more natural human interactions. This was the dilemma not only of the school in pursuit of the learner-centered philosophy, but also of the Korean students who wanted to find best-suited classes to maximize their investment in English.

When Korean students found that their first choice failed, they were compelled to deliberate on how they should navigate language educational commodities during the remaining period. Their concern particularly lay in the “broken” initial pathway of

---

22 Given my observations, high-intermediate communicative English courses seemed to be more oriented to fluency. In the courses, students spoke English more fluently and confidently, so that student-student interactions in small groups were richer in terms of the amount and quality. Thus, some of the Korean students who left low-intermediate communicative English courses often came back to the high-intermediate and advanced courses.
English learning: oral communicative skills first and certificate programs later. As they realized that their oral English had not sufficiently improved in communicative English courses for the first couple of months, they were confronted with the decision whether they would continue to pursue communicative English courses, or, as planned, they should move to certificate courses even without sufficient achievement of oral skills in English. They thought that even though communicative English programs had limitations, they would grant them the greater possibility of being exposed to human interaction and acquiring oral skills in English than through certificate courses. At the same time, they were also concerned that their communicative English courses would not add any extra value to their language skills, which they thought certificate courses could provide. Thus, Korean students could not simply abandon the option of pursuing certificate courses.

The value calculation of the two different forms of English, that is, human interaction and English for certification, depends on individual students, as they have different speculations on the benefits and rewards of the two types of English. Moreover, the formula for evaluating the values of English programs is not always firmly established, but rather momentarily and contextually calibrated and recalibrated. Thus, all students have different trajectories of class choice. For instance, Dongil and Insung continued to improve their oral skills; they strived to find classes that seemed to meet their expectations for human and natural interactions. On the other hand, Minsik and Jungmin took communicative courses only during the early period of their study abroad and moved on to Business English certificate courses. However, whatever path the students chose to take, they shared an assumption—their choice should be rational. Namely, they were convinced that their choice should bring about valuable benefits and rewards. However, as seen in the following sections, despite their rational class choices— that is, class “shopping”—their constant navigation of “good” language commodities reveals tensions in the value formation and, consequently, causes dissatisfaction, again.
3 Teacher “shopping”

3.1 Institutional and cultural conditions for “shopping”

Jennifer, an academic director, shared with me her experience of consulting with three Korean students:

Excerpt 5.4: Conversation with Jennifer (January 2014)
Jennifer: Korean students once came to my office to change their classes in the first week. They’re two girls and one boy. So I talked about what courses were available, but they talked with each other and kept saying they didn’t like it. Whenever I suggested a change, they said no, no, and no. We conducted our discussion like this for 30 minutes. They discussed the courses that I suggested and stated that they didn’t like it. So I offered the list of available courses and asked them to come back when they agreed. They came back, but they did the same thing. So I wondered why they didn’t like those classes, and they said they didn’t like the teachers.

During her consultation, she was annoyed by the three Korean students’ indecisiveness. Preoccupied with choosing classes, they repeatedly came to Jennifer’s office and endlessly discussed their class “shopping” together. When Jennifer asked why they were so indecisive, the students said, “we didn’t like the teachers.” She told me that it did not make sense to her that they evaluated teachers, as they had not taken the classes or had only taken just one lesson.

In some sense, such Korean students’ consideration of teachers in their choice of class is grounded in the fact that “good” teachers will make a difference in their English learning outcomes. From the inception of English study abroad, Korean students imagine teachers as “native English speakers” even though some of the teachers in Lingua City, for example, are immigrants and their first language is not English. Furthermore, they imagine that teachers would be native speakers who are accessible and willing to communicate with them. In the pre-departure and early periods of English study abroad, Korean students hope that they would be closer to teachers like friends; for example, they look forward to hanging out and going to a restaurant or pub with teachers after class. However, such intimate relationship building rarely happens with teachers at Lingua City. Insung felt that teachers and students were separated (namnamgatta) even though
teachers were kind and active within the classroom. The Korean students who have studied English in the Philippines, like Insung, tend to experience such feeling more intensely, as they compare teachers in the Canadian school with Filipino/a teachers. Insung added, “Filipino teachers were very kind. It was natural that we talked together even after class. But teachers here leave their class right after class” (Interview, July 2013). The ability to develop a close relationship between Filipino/a teachers and Korean students is not only because the dominant formats of the class are one-to-one conversations and small groups, but also because, in some cases, teachers reside together with students in dormitories.  

In Toronto, however, Korean students can meet teachers only in the classroom, so that they are likely to position teachers as “pedagogical” interlocutors more than “intimate” interlocutors (Chapter 4). Thus, Korean students’ expectations and evaluations of teachers at Lingua City largely rely on teachers’ performance in class.

When Korean students discover that low-intermediate communicative English courses fail to satisfy their needs for quality human interaction, they come to be more attentive to teachers’ performances as a criterion for class choice. This is because they realize that the amount and quality of classroom interaction greatly depend on teachers’ pedagogical competence. Reproducing the discourse of teachers as facilitators, teachers are convinced that finding “good” teachers – that is, teacher “shopping” – is an important part of their English learning.

In fact, there is an institutional factor that contributes to making teacher “shopping” a more important and shared practice among Korean students – that is, the policies of course selection and change. As the learner-centered school tries to offer quality education to students by satisfying their needs, they have multiple procedures for course

---

23 I am not suggesting that teachers at Lingua City are disinterested to students. They do their best in their teaching in classrooms to help their students make the most of their English education. From the perspective of the political economy of language, Korean students’ perception regarding Canadian and Filipino/a teachers is related to the stratification of English teacher labor in the global English market. Both Filipino/a and Canadian teachers are not obliged to do “extra work” or to do more intense “affective labor” without additional payment. The intimate relationship between teachers and students in the Philippines are made possible by Filipino/a teachers’ cheap wages, and, further, the English industry in the Philippines commodifies affective elements, such as intimacy, as an added value to maintain their market share in the stratified global English market.

24 Teachers as “facilitators” is the role that communicative language teaching (Brown, 2014; Brown & Lee, 2015; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011) or student-centered teaching (Anton, 1999; Nunan, 1988; Tudor, 1993) encourage teachers to take.
selection and change. As mentioned earlier, first of all, the school offers diverse courses and programs to choose from. However, the school does not leave the burden of the creation of a timetable on students entirely. Teachers, academic directors, and cultural counselors help with timetables. In choosing courses for the next session, students have a consulting session during class with their morning class teachers. In the session, the teachers assess students’ English improvement, determine their English proficiency levels, ask about their needs and interests, and suggest the best-suited courses for the next session. In the next session, students attend the first classes of the courses that they chose with support of the teachers from the previous session, but they are allowed to change them in cases where they are not satisfied with the courses. To find an alternate suitable class, students are permitted to audit and change courses in the first week of the session. Through the diverse programs and courses, professional support, and class audit/change policy, the school tries to help students find best-suited courses, maintain learning motivation during their time at the school, and ultimately ensure students’ satisfaction with their learning experience. However, with the system of monthly selection of courses and the audit/changing of courses, students often go through teacher changes, and the system encourages them to be highly reflective of their educational choices.

These school policies produce another interesting cultural condition for class “shopping” – intra-ethnic information sharing, or meta-consumptive talk (Shankar, 2006, 2008), about class. As Shankar (2006, 2008) points out, the meanings and values of consumable objects are culturally constructed, represented, and circulated through conversations. It is not uncommon to see Korean students talking about their classes and teachers in and out of school. In their conversations, Korean students share their experiences and evaluations of classes and teachers with other Korean students, and use this information when they choose courses in the next session. Minsik stated bluntly the process of class choice and change: “When we chose classes, we heard sosū (“source”: information) from Korean friends and then chose them. When we needed to change classes, we used the information, too” (Interview, January 2014). Especially, in contrast to conversations with non-Korean classmates and teachers in English, when they are with other Korean friends, their evaluations become more critical, specific, and nuanced, as they use their first language, Korean.
The conversation below represents a typical meta-consumptive talk between Korean students:

Excerpt 5.5: Conversation between Junghyuk and Dongil (September 11, 2013)

Junghyuk: I took a Business English course several times. Even though it was the same level, I liked it a lot, so I took it several times.

Dongil: Who taught it?

Junghyuk: Katherine. She is an older woman teacher, but she is sik’ŭ (“chic”; elegant and nice). Koreans like her classes. Their panŭng (“response”; what they say about Katherine’s class) is excellent.

In Chull: Why do Koreans like her?

Junghyuk: I like how she taught the course. She provided a situation and made students discuss it. She always said to me, “you did a great job.”

The characteristics of Korean students’ conversations about classes are that they tend to associate the evaluation of classes with the evaluation of teachers and place a greater importance on who teaches it rather than what type of English is taught. In this conversation, when Junghyuk first mentions that he has taken the same course, Business English, a number of times, Dongil asks who is teaching the class. Junghyuk says the teacher’s name and describes her. Then, he substantiates his opinion by generalizing it: “Korean students like her classes.” When I ask why Korean students like her class, Junghyuk responds that he likes her teaching style and considerate personality, which he thinks contribute to fostering oral interactions in her class. Moreover, his preference toward her teaching overrides other educational considerations, such as English proficiency level or learning content.

Essentially, Korean students’ conversations about teachers represent the process of legitimatizing teachers as “good” or “bad” educators. They are aware that there is a greater possibility of meeting their communicative needs when they refer not only to what is taught in the class, but also to who teaches the class and how they teach it. Korean students recognize that certain teachers at the school are more helpful with their goal of improving English oral fluency by effectively managing classroom activities, organizations, and atmospheres. Thus, the choice of “good” English teachers is of particular importance to Korean learners who continue to strive to improve oral skills in English rather than those who seek to obtain English certificates. Among key informants,
Dongil was one of the students who had such a goal. In what follows, I will examine in more detail which teachers Dongil perceived as “good,” why he perceived them that way, and how the teachers met his needs for human interaction.

3.2 “Organized” teachers: Securing the desired quantity and quality of classroom interaction

When I tried to contact teachers for classroom observation, Dongil often recommended John to me, arguing that he was one of the best teachers at the school. I also heard that Dongil had mentioned to his Korean friends that John was the best teacher. His evaluation of John came from his experience of taking his course, Presentation, that Dongil took in his fourth session. He reasoned that his presentation course was “perfectly organized” so there was “no time wasted.” It was in contrast to other courses where teachers “uselessly spent class hours talking about their personal stories or joking” rather than doing meaningful pedagogical activities (Interview, July 2013). He described John’s teaching in the following way:

Excerpt 5.6: Interview with Dongil (August 2013)
Dongil: Among afternoon courses, (the best one is) Presentation! I really liked the ways that John made students practice (English presentation). It’s not random, like just making students present, but he divided the students into a group of three, then into a group of two, and finally they presented alone. It’s sequential. I had never presented in English in Korea, but now I can say that I have learned how to do it here.

Dongil was satisfied with the format and sequence of John’s Presentation course; John created various participant structures for presentation activities and sequenced the organizations from group to individual work. To Dongil, the format and sequence seemed more systematic than those of presentation activities in other classes, which tended to stick to a single participant structure (see Excerpt 5.3). Dongil appreciated such a systematic organization of activities, as he could gain confidence in giving an oral presentation in English upon completion of John’s class. This was a great accomplishment for him.
In the first class of his Presentation course, John highlighted that this class was not designed for “conversation-style speaking skills,” but for “presentation skills in English.” He added that most of the class time would be allotted to individual work, such as doing research on a presentation topic, writing a script, and practicing a presentation, and that the basic format of this class consisted of script-writing, practicing, and presenting. In spite of such comments that sounded unfavorable to Korean students’ expectations for human interaction, Korean students, including Dongil, evaluated John’s course as one that offered a number of opportunities to talk during class (marhal kihoega manhün suŏp).

The analysis of my observations on his Presentation class (See Appendix 3) indicates that John created two interactional events contributing to securing the quantity and quality of verbal interaction in class. First, as Dongil mentioned, John tried to systematically manage the formation and variation of participant structures in presentation practices. At the course level, John made students engage in different forms of presentations every week: short individual presentations, and longer group, pair and individual presentations. In the first week, students were required to give a short individual presentation to get accustomed to the basic presentation skills taught by John. In the following weeks, they were supposed to deliver a group presentation with three or four members, a pair presentation, and finally an individual presentation. John told me that he employed such group-to-individual structures to help with students’ confidence in speaking in public. He argued that students could effectively learn how to deal with fear and nervousness, as students started with a situation of group work where they would have a lower level of anxiety and face less pressure. In the meantime, at the activity level, he continued to assign and reassign students to different practice groups, so students were led to practice their presentation with a new audience and to listen to presentations by multiple students. Through this constant shuffling of group members, students could practice multiple times to refine their presentations so as to give a “perfect” final presentation. Moreover, during presentation practices, John did not allow students to memorize their speeches, but rather led them to use note cards to help them remember key points and make eye contact with the audience. This technique contributed to keeping students from using final draft talk and to producing presentations more naturally.
Second, John created a clearly bounded communicative situation of student-student feedback in class and gave students clear instructions on the types of feedback that they were supposed to offer. For instance, during their presentation practices, students were encouraged to give feedback on their peer’s presentation, such as how effectively they used “hooks” in the introduction. More important is that the situation of exchanging feedback led students to have unplanned and explorative conversations during the student-student interaction. Similar to the peer writing conference model (Johnson, 1995), in the feedback sessions, students expressed their opinions about other students’ presentations, and the presenter and the audience discussed them.

In the actual final presentation, the student-student interaction took the form of a Q & A session following each presentation. John clarified that during a Q & A session, students should give feedback not about the structure of the presentation or presentation style, but on the content of the presentation. During this class, students could have another opportunity for unplanned interaction:

Excerpt 5.7: Student-student interaction—Q & A session
Participants: S1 (Korean male student), S2 (Brazilian male student), S3 (Saudi Arabian male student)

1 S1: I want you guys feel more interest in my country. Thank you.
2 S2, S3: ((applaud))
3 S1: Do you guys have any questions?
4 S2: Yes, of course. You said, about the price.
5 S1: Yes, price.
6 S2: In the store, that is, the price only costs, I mean that=
7 S1: =Uh, uh, there are uh, lower cost and higher cost. If you don't have enough money to buy some cloth, you can go, some specific stores. Some sell very cheap.
8 S2: How is the quality?
9 S1: Quality is usually good. Because we are very, umm, used to=
10 S2: =Everyone go there? Everyone goes to there to buy something?
11 S1: Yeah.
12 S2: Store all like for special neighborhood?
13 S1: Special?
14 S2: Yeah, special neighborhood to go there, or all like, new one go there?
15 S1: Anyone, anyone can go there.
In this excerpt, following Student 1’s presentation about his country, South Korea, Student 2 is asking a question about shopping in South Korea such as about prices and quality, and whether malls are exclusive to a particular group of people. In this Q & A session requiring spontaneous communication, although Student 1 uses fillers in his response (line 7, line 9), it seems that Student 1 successfully answers Student 2’s questions. In line 10-15, particularly, he negotiates the meanings and intentions of Student 2’s follow-up question as to the exclusivity of a certain shopping mall. In answering this question, Student 1 first recasts the part of the question to clarify the questioner’s intention (line 13). He does not clearly understand it because of his assumption that all shopping malls are open to the public (line 11), the understanding of which Student 2 does not share with him. Listening to Student 2’s elaboration (line 14), Student 1 comprehends the point about the cultural difference and confirms his answer (line 15).

In his Presentation course, John organized classroom activities in highly structured ways, in order to achieve his teaching goal of improving students’ English presentation skills and confidence in public speaking. The orchestrated and guided structures of classroom activities not only gave students the opportunity to practice and give presentations multiple times, but also provided them with an opportunity for unplanned and spontaneous modes of communication. For Korean students, like Dongil, John’s course satisfied their expectations for the quantity and quality of human interaction. In turn, they evaluated John as a “good” teacher and recommended him to other Korean friends at Lingua City.

3.3 “Active” teachers: Facilitating “backstage” interaction

At lunchtime, teachers at Lingua City leave their classrooms, where students remain or their school friends join them to have lunch together. The teachers come back to their classrooms about 10 minutes before the afternoon class starts. In July 2013, I bumped into Susan, a young female teacher, almost every weekday, as I had lunch with my informants in Susan’s classroom. She always looked funny, initiating conversation
with students in the classroom in a high-pitched voice. While speaking with students, she laughed a lot, and her laughter was loud enough to echo through the entire floor.

In fact, Dongil liked her and her class, because she was always “active” and “fun.” In an interview, Dongil clarified why he liked her class, associating her personality to the atmosphere of her class:

Excerpt 5.8: Interview with Dongil (August 2013)
Dongil: While taking James’s class, I’ve gotten to hate him. One of the reasons was, when I asked a question, he said no, no, no, depending on his mood. This is problematic because I encountered such reactions several times, was daunted (*chunugi tülta*), and ended up not asking a question again. However, teachers like Susan make students feel comfortable, and so they keep talking. That is, she made the (classroom) atmosphere comfortable.

Comparing Susan with another teacher, James, Dongil is constructing Susan as a “good” teacher. The point of comparison is their attitudes toward students. Dongil felt that James was quite moody and arrogant, as James explicitly refused to answer Dongil’s questions in several cases. Such responses daunted Dongil, which made him give up asking a question in James’ class – an important communicative act for students to initiate oral interactions with a teacher. In contrast, Susan is a teacher who makes students feel comfortable and thus initiates or maintains interactions in classroom activities. Dongil sees such teachers’ attitudes toward students as an important element for language learning; teachers should act not only as cognitive facilitators but also as emotional supporters.

Indeed, as Korean students appreciate teachers’ emotional support, they prefer certain teachers not only because of their teaching style, but also because of their personalities. They tend to be inclined toward “young,” “active,” “kind,” “hilarious,” and “considerate” teachers, and avoid choosing “old” and “serious” teachers. They assume that the first type of teacher encourages them to engage in classroom activities, whereas the latter type of teacher makes them feel bored and lose interest in learning. Generally, the first type of teacher is represented as a group of young female teachers in the school. Susan is one of them.
When I observed her Colloquial English course (See Appendix 3), I could see that activities and class organization in her lessons were not distinctive. As other teachers usually did, she preferred to first engage students in pair/group work, and then finish the lesson with the whole class. She also engaged students in a role-play activity. However, the most noticeable element of her teaching was that she actively participated in students’ conversations. Correspondingly, her participation affected the dynamics of the student-student interaction, as seen in the comparison of the following two excerpts taken from a group activity in her class, the Wordteasers® game. In this game, from a group of three or four students, one student would pick up a card and read a starter sentence on the card including an idiom. The other students would guess the meaning, and then all of them would continue to talk based on the conversation starter. In Excerpt 5.9, a group of three Korean male students were playing this game:

Excerpt 5.9: Student-student interaction—vocabulary game activity
Participant: S1, S2, S3 (all Korean male students)
(pause in bold)

1   S1: Let me pick another one.
2   S2: OK
   \(\text{(3.0)}\) (S1 is picking up a word card)
3   S1: Imitate someone you think as upper crust. Upper crust?
4   S2: Upper crust?
5   S1: Crust.
6   S3: Upper crust?
7   S1: Any case you want?
   \(\text{(6.0)}\)
8   S2: What does it mean, upper crust.
9   S1: It means [rich,] dominant, or noble people in high society.
10  S2: [rich?]
11  S3: Upper crust.
12  S2: Upper crust
   \(\text{(7.0)}\) (Students are writing down the idiom on their notebooks)
13  S1: Imitate someone you think.
14  S2: You mean, imitate? ((laugh))
15  S1: Someone upper crust.
   \(\text{(6.0)}\)
16  S2: Who do you think is upper crust?
   \(\text{(3.0)}\)
17  S1: What's wrong with thinking?
   \(\text{(3.0)}\)
In this excerpt, the three Korean male students are discussing the idiom, “upper crust,” which Student 1 picks up from the card stack. Although the students try to sustain the interaction, there are lengthy pauses that make their interaction fragmented and a bit awkward. Subsequent to line 2, they have a three-second pause, as the student picks up and reads the card. Student 1 reads a conversation starter in line 3, but the other two students cannot guess the meaning and simply repeat the target idiom, “upper crust.” After a six-second pause, Student 2 asks about the meaning (line 8), and Student 1 reads the meaning that appears on the other side of the card (line 9). Then, they pause for seven seconds, as they write down the idiom and its meaning in their notes. In line 13, Student 1 resumes their conversation by repeating the conversation starter on the card, but as no one starts to talk, he begs for a response (line 17). Student 3, who has not said anything so far, mentions, “Lee Kun-hee,” as all of the members in the group are Korean and would be familiar with his name, and the other students laugh. When Student 1 asks how they can imitate Lee Kun-hee, but as no instant response follows, he responds himself, “on
wheelchair” (line 26). Student 2 repeats the phrase, and after a pause, suggests moving to the next round.

About 10 minutes after the above exchange, Susan came around to this Korean male students’ group. She jumped into the ongoing group activity and initiated conversation. Showing off her cup decorated with different world languages, she said that the Korean language was missing from the cup. Then, Susan asked about the size of South Korea, and the three students spoke with her about the topic for about one minute. Following this, the students returned to their game:

Excerpt 5.10: Teacher-student interaction—vocabulary game activity
Participants: T (Susan), S1, S2, S3 (all Korean male students)

1 S1: Where did we stop?
2 S2: Uh-oh, umm.
3 S1: Which question did we stop? (4.0) Bury the hatchet?
4 S2: (They stopped it while saying whom we bury the hatchet with.) Girlfriend. ((laugh))
5 S3: Hatchet? hatchet?
6 S1: Hatchet.
7 T: (to S3) Hatchet
8 S3: Hatchet
9 T: Hatchet.
10 S1: Hatchet, hatchet is=
11 T: =Hatchet is like [ knife] , uh, ax.
12 S2: [wood? ]
13 S2: Ax.
14 T: A small ax
15 Ss: Ah
16 S1: Bury the hatchet?
17 [xxx]
18 S2: Have a conversation
19 T: Your girlfriend? Is she your girlfriend?
20 S1: I don’t have a girlfriend. [Ex]-girl friend.
21 S2: [Ex]
22 T: Do you still fight with your ex-girlfriend?
23 S2: No, no, no, at that moment.
24 T: At the past then ((laugh))
25 S2: It was like, almost, I was like, crazy.

---

25 This is a satirical image of Korean conglomerate (chaebol) leaders. When they are indicted for conducting illegal business, they present themselves to the public or the press in a wheelchair so as to appear sick.
T: What did she do?
S2: She just keep blaming me. She kept blaming me.
T: Yeah, that's because of your fault.
S2: I don’t think so. I don’t think so. I don’t think so. ((laugh))
S1/S3: ((laugh))
S1: Why?
T: That’s the problem. You don’t think so. You guys, you never
think so.
S2: She wanted me to hang out every day, almost everyday. But=
T:= Yeah, you're the boyfriend. [ Hello? ]
S2: [I have ] I have been very busy, really.
T: Too busy for me? Oh my god, (hitting on the desk) it’s
unacceptable.
All: ((laugh))
S2: I slept just for three or four hours a day.
T: Why, what were you doing at that time?
S2: Student. Always doing homework=
T: =High school student? or university?
S1/S3: ((laugh))
S2: ((laugh)) Of course, university.
T: ((laugh)) It sounds like high school, ((laugh)) in Korea.
S2: A lot of reports and homework and=
S1: =engineering
S2: Yeah, and experiment reports.
T: I heard that.
S2: Crazy.

Before Susan joined their group, the three Korean students were talking about an idiomatic expression, “bury the hatchet,” and the persons with whom they “bury the hatchet.” In this example, where Susan joins in the group’s activity, first, the interaction between Susan and the students is pedagogical; she corrects Student 3’s pronunciation (line 5-9), provides the definition of a hatchet (line 10-15), and then discusses what the expression means – “have a conversation” (line 16-17). However, from line 18 and on, Susan has a conversation with Student 2 about his ex-girlfriend, which sounds quite personal or non-pedagogical. As seen with the frequent laughter throughout, the interaction is cheerful, and the cheerfulness increases as Susan keeps teasing Student 2 (line 27, 31, 33, 35, 43). As Student 2 also defends himself, the conversation is sustained.

As this excerpt shows, Susan’s class had a distinctive characteristic in terms of the allocation and displacement of front stage and backstage interactions (Goffman, 1990). In
educational settings, interactions on the front stage can be interpreted as engaging with target content and activities of the class. In contrast, the backstage interactions may be defined as personal conversations between students, which are not the topical focus of the course. As described above in Amanda’s and John’s classes, most teachers try to streamline the classroom interactions into the front stage ones using the pedagogical mindset, although students create backstage talk in their linguistic practices (Heller, 2006; Pérez-Milans, 2013). In her class, however, Susan has frequent transitions from front stage to backstage interactions, allots more time to the latter or, in some sense, blurs the boundary between the two types of interaction. It should be noted that her mobilization of backstage interaction involves the subject of the course (Erickson, 1982), as colloquial English is predominantly used in everyday conversational situations. At the same time, it is evident that her style of teaching or interaction with students, stressing backstage interaction, generates a cheerful atmosphere where students are more likely to initiate and sustain an unplanned interaction with Susan. Through such experiences of talking with Susan in her class, Korean students think that she creates not only a “fun” classroom environment but also a greater number of opportunities for unplanned and natural verbal interaction with her.

Susan’s active participation in students’ interaction and frequent mobilization of less pedagogical and more personal topics enables Korean students to perceive that she is an “active” and “fun” teacher. Further, they realize that teachers with such personalities can create communicative settings beyond classroom interaction, which tend to be planned and structured, and invite them to more naturalistic situations in student-teacher interaction. They appreciate the student-teacher interaction, as they identify it as a comparable quality of interaction between them and locals outside of an educational setting. The value of backstage talk initiated by “active” teachers represents Korean students’ want for human interaction.

3.4 Limits to teacher “shopping”: Issues of “silence” and non-native classmates

The analysis of the two teachers, John and Susan, and their classes, Presentation and Colloquial English, demonstrates that teachers’ actual performances in classrooms
are important components in fostering the quantity and quality of classroom interaction. Korean students tend to perceive their performances as a consequence of teachers’ teaching styles or personalities rather than part of the dynamics of various factors in classroom settings (Johnson, 1995). Such understandings of the relationship between classroom interaction and teachers underscore Korean learners’ ideological assumption of teacher “shopping.” However, as they continue to teacher “shop,” ironically, they also discover that teachers are not the sole factor for securing satisfactory classroom interaction. The limitation of teacher “shopping” stems from two non-teacher elements: Korean students’ linguistic habitus and the prevalence of student-student interaction in communication-oriented courses.

First, there is a contradiction that while Korean students depreciate planned interactions as “patterned” and “boring,” they are less likely to initiate an unplanned and spontaneous interaction in classroom activities. Their behaviors in classroom communication may relate to the issues of “silence” (Nakane, 2007) and “reticence” (Tsui, 1996) of East Asian students in intercultural communication or language learning (also see Duff, 2002; Kubota, 1999; Sullivan, 2000). In fact, the discourse of the “silent” Koreans are produced and circulated in the school by teachers, non-Korean or non-East Asian, especially Latin American, students, and even Korean students. Teachers and non-Korean students claim that their “silence” is due to perfectionism in English (J. Cho, 2015; J. S.-Y. Park, 2009a); they describe Korean students as learners who want to speak a perfect English and who are greatly concerned about errors in their English. On the other hand, Korean students agree with the English perfectionism explanation, but, at the same time, they point out a more cultural aspect of initiating an interaction. Korean students tend to view students who frequently initiate an unplanned interaction in classrooms as “boasters.” In the school context, they project such negative framing mostly toward Latin American students, as seen in Minsik’s statement: “we [Korean students] do not show off, but Latin American (students) like to show off a lot in classrooms” (Interview, January 2014).

---

26 I would like to make sure that I am not characterizing these Korean students’ behaviors as a problem to be tackled or a point of intervention for their language learning. Kubota (1999) argues that the image of the “silent” Japanese is discursively constructed in the ELT field. Nakane (2007) research shows that silence in communication is a highly complex phenomenon affected by individual, situational, and sociocultural factors.
Consequently, Korean students prefer to have unplanned interactions in a certain communicative situation where their anxiety over English is lowered and where an unplanned interaction is officially allowed. The typical interaction setting is a one-to-one session between a student and a teacher. However, in classroom settings, there are limited opportunities to have one-to-one sessions with teachers. The participant structure typically takes place only when teachers give customized verbal feedback on students’ individual work.

Second, in communication-oriented classes, the majority of classroom interaction occurs between peers. As the teachers tend to avoid lecture-style instruction and orient classroom activities to task-based instruction, they prefer to implement pair or group work; as a result, student-student interaction is highly encouraged. However, Korean students contend that as their classmates’ English is not fluent and native-like, the quality of student-student interaction does not meet their expectations; their English is fragmented, the pattern is repetitive, and the situation turns boring (See Excerpt 5.2 and 5.9). Thus, even though they choose the courses where teachers try to organize classroom interaction activities systematically or offer naturalistic communicative situations, they often feel that their communicative skills in English are not significantly improved.

This sense of lack of learning efficacy causes Korean students’ anxiety over their language investment. It often discourages Korean students to continue to take communicative-oriented courses. As an alternative, they often try out for academic English or test-preparation programs, believing that the formal types of English, explicit instruction on language forms, functions and uses, and intensive learning in those programs would provide them a sense of learning. Another alternative language education that Korean students take is an individual tutoring or tutoring-style program at another school (Chapter 4). Although they need to pay additional costs for this option, they think that human interaction with native English-speaking tutors is worth it, as it secures the desired quality and quantity of human interaction in a “comfort” zone.
4 Certificate “shopping”

4.1 Documenting language investment

For Korean students, “teacher” shopping is an important strategy to secure a desired amount and quality of classroom interaction for the acquisition of oral communicative skills in English. However, they consider another track for class shopping – that is, certificate “shopping.” They navigate courses and programs that will offer a certificate upon their successful completion. Their pursuit of certificates is associated with their concern over how to demonstrate their English learning outcomes upon returning to South Korea. The insecurity leads Korean students to take certificate courses even though they sense that their oral English has not improved.

In the school, there are four ways of documenting students’ English skills: obtaining a certificate of completion, having their English proficiency level tested, achieving a professional English certificate, and getting an English proficiency certificate granted by an external and global assessment institute (e.g., Educational Testing Service, Cambridge English Language Assessment). Korean students assign different meanings and values to these types of certificates during their English study abroad. In Bourdieu’s (1984, 1986) terms, certificates are an institutional form of cultural capital. Thus, the value of the form of cultural capital is determined and maintained by what is intended to be certified (the object of certification), who certifies it (the agency of certification), and how the agency certifies it (the reliability of certification). Essentially, Korean students’ valuation of the four types of certificates operates in the logics; in “shopping” certificates, they constantly consider these factors in order to obtain the maximum value of certificates.

First, students at Lingua City are offered a certificate of completion when they attend more than 80% of their classes. Because of the condition of attendance on the certification, what Korean students conceive as documented in this certificate is not so

27 It does not mean that the two types of class shopping are exclusive to each other. Rather, it is relational. First, these two ways of shopping are usually done simultaneously. For example, students choose a “good” teacher’s course in a certain certificate program. Second, they are more inclined to certificate “shop” when their preferred teachers or courses are unavailable. Third, in some cases, students must take a course to obtain a certificate, so they cannot teacher “shop.”
much an actual improvement of English competence that the successful attendance may bring out, but their efforts in maintaining a high attendance rate. In other words, they view this certificate as a document telling their parents or others that during English study abroad, they attended the school regularly and took it seriously. It is not true that this document is completely useless, because they struggle with absenteeism (Chapter 6), and some of them fail to meet the attendance requirement. By acquiring this certificate, at least, they can verify that they successfully managed their independent overseas life and that they did not simply kill time and waste money.

The tool demonstrating learners’ language competence more directly is the proficiency levels that the school develops and employs. New students are offered their first language proficiency level on the basis of the result of a placement test, and at the end of each session, teachers of the morning class assess a student’s proficiency level and determine whether a student can proceed to the next level. In spite of the school’s efforts to ensure a reliable and valid implementation of the level system, Korean students are suspicious of the reliability. They mentioned that when they asked to be moved up a level, most of the teachers allowed it, regardless of their actual competence levels. Ironically, they also reasoned that in their classes, there were classmates who sounded much less proficient, adding that it did not make sense to them to study together with students much less proficient than them. Through such experiences, they see a language proficiency level as more closely correlated to the duration of registration in the school than as a construct of language proficiency. They believe that it is not difficult to obtain the advanced level, if they continue to take courses without serious absenteeism. Similarly, they are convinced that it is not always the case that they can meet more proficient classmates in advanced-level classes. They bluntly state that moving up a level gives them a sort of complacency at best.

Korean students assume that the certificate of completion and the achievement in the school’s English proficiency level system are not reliable and distinct enough to justify their educational investment. As a result, they draw their interest to certificate programs at the school or sometimes elsewhere, such as professional English programs or certified English test programs, with the expectation of gaining added value. However, in navigating these programs, Korean students confront the operating mechanism of the
institutional form of cultural capital, especially, the issue of evaluating certifying institution. The tension and negotiation revolving around this issue, in turn, gives birth to re-signifying and re-evaluating the certificate programs.

4.2 Business English and internships: Added value and limits of certificates

When Korean students find that low-intermediate communicative English courses do not help with their oral English, most of them consider taking another program. Among language programs in the school, Business English programs emerge most interesting to them. In their English study abroad journeys, for instance, Dongil took Business English in his third month, and Minsik shifted his program from Communicative English to Business English and continued to do an internship. Dongil claimed that, as Korean students felt that communicative courses were not what they actually expected, many of them were encouraged to choose the Business English program as an alternative, with the idea, “I have to return to Korea at least with a certificate if I cannot acquire fluent English (sŏch’ina namgyŏ kaja)” (Interview, July 2013).

In fact, in the English study abroad industry, Business English programs are an emerging category, as an increasing number of adult students come to study English abroad for fostering employability. Thus, it has been a market trend that private language schools offer various Business English programs; for instance, Lingua City offers six business English sub-programs with 18 courses, in addition to an internship program. Similarly, South Korean English study abroad agencies advise their clients to take a Business English program and do an internship not only to acquire certificates, but also to maximize educational investment for future job seeking. A Korean study abroad agent said to me that internship programs were the most promising in the market, as it would offer the experience of using English and learning workplace skills in a real context (Field notes, April 10, 2013). The popularity of Business English and internship programs in the English study abroad industry is part of the current phenomenon of packaging communication/language and workplace skills in late capitalist society (Allan, 2013; Urciuoli, 2008). Following this trend, Korean students expect that their experience with
Business English and an internship in an English-speaking country will provide them with the global competence needing in future job markets (Chapter 2). For this reason, most of the Korean students in this study showed interest in Business English or internship programs, although their decision to take these programs depended on each student’s navigation and calculation of their value.

As Korean students begin to navigate business-related programs, they soon face broken promises. First, Lingua City offers two models of Business English certificate programs: content-based and English for business communication. The first model is designed to teach business concepts and issues through the English language. Meanwhile, the second model aims to teach communicative skills in English in the workplace such as business email, resume writing, or interview skills. Korean students tend to recognize the usefulness of the courses under the latter model, as they expect to write an English resume or do an English interview for a future recruitment process (Jang, 2015; Park, 2011). However, the tension mostly rises with regards to the courses in the first model. Some students complain that Business English courses are boring as they simply teach Business terminology and cases. In cases where students are majoring in business in their home universities, specifically, they are more likely to think that such Business English courses are meaningless to them – “the only difference is the medium of language” (Sangmoo, Interview, August 2013).

Second, Korean students face tension when they are thinking about doing an internship. In opposition to the commercialized promise of internship programs, they learn that their own or friends’ experiences of searching and completing internship programs are not always positive: most of the companies hiring interns are small-sized and local; it is difficult to find employment matching their major and interests; jobs at work are repetitive or manual. In spite of the low quality of the internship jobs, students think the school or other agencies charge high fees to introduce them to available firms. In such circumstances, Korean students weigh the benefits of internships; is it valuable enough to work in a Canadian company and communicate with Canadian coworkers even if the company is not prestigious and not relevant to areas of their future jobs?

As the expected benefits of Business English programs are ambiguous, it becomes more important for Korean students to calculate the value of the certificates that they will
obtain. Admittedly, they are aware that certificates will not be fully recognized because the issuing agencies do not have prestige in the South Korean job market. The certificate of Business English offered by the school is issued simply by a private language institute, not an educational institution such as a university. For this reason, Insung did not seek to complete a Business English program:

Excerpt 5.11: Interview with Insung (July 2013)²⁸
Insung: I think, I guess, they (Korean students in Business English courses) want to get certification. Of course, me, that time, I want to get, I wanted to get certification. But it is not working in, it is not work in Korea, it’s not working in Korea. But if someone has a certification, I don’t know it is good working when they want to accept for the company. I’m not sure. But it is a kind of the garbage. If they graduate from the school, they get certification, graduation certification (a certificate of completion). So it is enough.

At first, Insung wanted to obtain the certificate of a Business English program at the school, but he soon realized that Korean companies would not recognize it (“it’s not working”). He assumes that the certificate of completion would be enough to demonstrate his experience of English learning in Canada. To him, the certificate of Business English is worthless – it is “garbage.”

This mechanism similarly governs Korean students’ calculation of the value of internship documents. When students complete an internship, they obtain a certificate of completion and a letter of recommendation from the hiring company. However, most of the companies are local small-sized businesses. Korean students concede that a South Korean hiring company would not fully appreciate the value when they list their certificates on their resumes.

Despite the awareness of the limits of certificates, interestingly, a significant portion of Korean students continue to take Business English courses at school, and some of them further proceed to the internship program. They feel that even if the certificate simply adds a single experience to their resume (iryŏksŏe han chul), it would be better than nothing (ŏpnŭn kŏt podanŭn natta). The idea of “better than nothing” is a key discourse governing contemporary Korean youth’s project of skills development.

²⁸ At his request, this interview was conducted in English.
(Chapters 1 and 2). For them, the certificates are part of their project of amassing documents of various experiences and qualifications (تعليقات طبية). It is assumed that job applicants with one more qualification or experience than others can be in a better position in competitive job markets (Brown et al., 2003; Brown et al., 2011). Thus, Korean students are motivated to invest their resources into seemingly less valuable qualifications or skills to deal with uncertainty in and anxiety about the future (Jang, 2015).

In their words, however, Korean students in Business English programs justify their practice of accumulating certificates not as part of their self-development project, but as “good” experiences, or 경험 (also see the use of this term in Chapter 7). For instance, Minsik stuck with a Business English program and finished his English study abroad with an internship program. He was satisfied even with content-based English business courses. He told me that he felt he could learn something from business English courses, not only because the topics and content covered were more focused, consistent, and interesting, but also because classroom activities were more oriented to challenging discussions and presentations (Interview, January 2014). He contrasted these characteristics of Business English courses to those of communicative English courses, which address everyday topics (e.g., parties, celebrities, travel, etc.) and communicative functions (e.g., invitations, apologies, etc.). To him, Business English courses offered a “good” learning experience.

With the knowledge of resume writing and interview skills in English that he acquired in English for Business Communication courses, he embarked on a search for an internship. However, it was difficult for him to find an internship position that fit in with his major and career path; as a university student of automotive engineering, he wanted to work in a company in the auto industry. After searching and waiting for such a position for more than one month, helplessly, he had an interview for a travel agency for international students (Chapter 6), but failed to be offered a position. Finally, his study abroad agent introduced him to a local car repair shop; he was interviewed and offered a position that he accepted. Although his duty in the workplace was limited to mechanical and basic assistance, he valued his experience of the internship as a chance of immersing himself in local culture:
Excerpt 5.12: Interview with Minsik (January 2014)
Minsik: There were two parts (department) there. There were a body shop and a mechanics department. (...) I worked in the body shop for three days and moved to the mechanics department. I was familiar with what I needed to do, and it was easy for me. I found that I could do the work alone. But it was rare to work alone because it was dangerous. It’s a customer’s car.
What I did there was nothing important. Mostly, I chatted with them (co-workers) all the time, because we spent all day long together. If we heard something interesting on the radio, we talked about it. Or if I had something I needed to buy, I asked them where I should go. I spoke in English a lot, much more than I had in school.

In the car repair shop, Minsik chose to work in the mechanics department, as he had relevant knowledge as a student of automotive engineering. Although certain tasks looked manageable to him, he was not allowed to do them because he was an intern who could not assume responsibility of service in the workplace. Thus, his duty was “nothing important”; he assisted certified technicians. However, as he worked with coworkers all day long, who he said were Canadians who immigrated even before he was born, he had a number of opportunities to speak with them. Such an experience of immersion in a local workplace culture was valuable to him. Minsik deemed that talking with coworkers was a distinctive experience, as most of the Korean students in the school aimed to communicate with locals but failed (Chapters 3 and 4).

However, it should be noted that, although he appreciates his internship experience, he is also uncertain about the profitability of the internship certificate in the South Korean job market. Minsik was concerned that the company he worked for was simply a self-owned and community-based repair shop, not a global and prestigious motor company, such as Ford or Toyota. Nonetheless, he added that even though this experience was just a single item on his resume, what mattered was how he would narrate his experience when the opportunity arose, such as during interviews or in his cover letter (cf. Jang, 2015; Kerekes, et al., 2013; Roberts, 2012). He seemed to believe that the value of the internship program would be fulfilled when he began to apply for a job.
4.3 Intensive English certificate programs: Intensity as a reward

When Heejun got fed up with communicative English courses, like other Korean students, he tried out Business English courses. However, he soon quit the program because they were too boring. During that time, he pondered what program he should take, and finally consulted with his English study abroad agent. When he told the agent that he felt the need for providing evidence (chūnggŏ) of his success of his overseas language study, the agent introduced Cambridge English programs to him. Cambridge English programs are designed to prepare students for the Cambridge English qualification exams. Although the school offers various test preparation courses, such as TOEFL, TOEIC, and IELTS, Cambridge English certificate programs are administrated in different ways. Once students register in the program, they must take full-time courses for approximately three months. In addition, two certified teachers take responsibility for the classes during this period. Thus, the students are not allowed to class or teacher “shop.” Also, they are required to take a Cambridge English certificate test at the end of the course. The English proficiency certificate is offered not by the school, but by the Cambridge English Language Assessment, which is a globally recognized institute for language assessment and qualifications. Differing from other proficiency tests, such as TOEFL or IELTS, it demonstrates the proficiency not via a score but a certificate level, and the certification is permanent without an expiry date. The certification levels consist of Preliminary (PET), First (FCE), Advanced (CAE), and Proficiency (CPE). The official website states that FCE is its “most popular qualification, accepted by thousands of business and educational institutions worldwide.” Considering these features, Heejun decided to take the FCE program.

In November 2013, I observed Heejun’s Cambridge English class for two full days. It was said that Cambridge English courses were popular among European students because of the wider use of Cambridge English certificates in Europe. However, the student demography of the session that I observed was exceptional; nine of ten students were Koreans (four males and five females), including Heejun, Hyunbin, and Seulki, all

---

29 For more information, see its official website (http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams/). As listed on the website, the four certificates are for general English proficiency. The institute also implements certificate tests for English for specific purposes or other standardized English tests.
informants in the focal network. The only non-Korean student was a Brazilian male student. Following the format of the test, the program had a daily timetable as presented in Table 5.2, and classroom activities were structured according to the course book, *First Expert: Cambridge English*. Additionally, a mock test was administered once a week to help students monitor their progress.

Table 5.2

*Timetable of FCE Course*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Areas of language skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00-10:30</td>
<td>Reading / Use of English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45-12:00</td>
<td>Listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:00-14:30</td>
<td>Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:45-16:00</td>
<td>Speaking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this program, one teacher taught the morning classes, and the other teacher taught the afternoon classes, and students practiced each part every day. In pre- and post-observation conversations, the teachers highlighted that they focus on both accuracy and fluency of English proficiency, as Cambridge English tests assess comprehensive language competence, including receptive and productive knowledge in all the areas of language skills. Also, they indicated that, as the goal of the program was to ensure students pass the test and obtain the certificate, there was a lot to learn in comparison to other programs at the school, and a number of assignments were given. As the school’s course outline specifies, it was an “intensive” course.

In a group interview with Korean students in the FCE course, Hyunjin explained why she decided to take the Cambridge English certificate program:

Excerpt 5.13: Group interview 1 (November 2013)
Hyunjin: First of all, I felt bad that I would return without anything. I needed to bring just one thing back home. The other reason was for my future, especially for seeking a job.
In Chull: But why not Business English programs?
Hyunjin: The purpose of the Business English program was only to get the certificate. I asked different people about Business English certificates, and my study abroad agent told me that acquiring the certificate is equivalent to having experience with a student club in university (*tongari hwaltong*) in
the job market. I want to work in an international company or an overseas branch of a Korean corporation. I will be preparing for these jobs, so I thought that Cambridge English certificate would help.

In Chull: Do you still believe that it will help?
Hyunjin: It’s great that I can study a lot in this course, much more than in other courses.

Like Heejun, Hyunjin was concerned about the rewards of her educational investment that she could present and mobilize upon her return to Korea. She needed a tangible product, that is, a certificate, but did not think of Business English certificates as a valuable alternative, because she was told that the expected value in the job market would be meager. As she wants to work in a global or multinational company where English may be an important tool for communication (Chapter 2), she thought that globally recognized Cambridge English certificates would be more beneficial. Hyunjin’s account of her choosing the FCE course exposes the mechanism of value formation of an institutional form of cultural capital. However, when I ask whether she still thinks that the certificate will help, Hyunjin brings her experience of the course to the fore – she is studying a lot or intensively, compared to other courses that she took at the school. In other words, she is now valuing the intensity of the course as a benefit.

Korean students of FCE courses often verbalize how intense the course is and how hard they should study to complete the program:

Excerpt 5.14: Group interview 2 (November 2013)
Jiyoung: It’s tough (ppaksida). There are a lot of assignments. At home, I just do the assignments and go to bed. I cannot rest. (…) In the first couples of weeks, I almost died. I could not rest. I would just get back from school, but had to study again to finish homework. Now I’ve gotten used to it.
Joori: My case was, I joined this course in the middle, not from the beginning like others. (…) I couldn’t have caught up to other students if I hadn’t studied more. And the assignments that I had to do were piling up, and the teachers didn’t make any special considerations for me because I joined the class in the middle. I kept studying alone and doing assignments. (…) It was really tough (ppaksida). But it’s good because as long as it is tough, I have to study more.

In this interview excerpt, both Jiyoung and Joori describe their FCE course as ppaksida (tough); they study full time in the school, and study again at home to complete
the heavy workload of assignments. While they are taking this course, they cannot rest or “play.” In spite of the intensity of study, as seen in Joori’s last comment, they do not complain about it; rather, it is a sign of satisfaction with the program.

At the end of the course, the students took the Cambridge English certificate exam, but some of them failed to obtain the certificate. However, they were not dissatisfied with their experience of studying in the FCE course at all. Interestingly, most of them made a similar comment about the benefits of the course; for example, Hyunbin stated that what he learned during one month of the FCE course was more than what he learned in six months of ESL (Interview, December 2013). Furthermore, the satisfaction with the intensive course led Heejun to take another intensive course, a Translation/Interpretation program at another language institute. The Cambridge English program acted as important feeder programs for Korean students to similarly intensive certificate programs such as Translation/Interpretation or TESOL certificate programs.

Korean students often choose intensive certificate programs not only to obtain professional English certificates, but more importantly, to study English intensively, even if they do not have a plan to work in such professions. Interestingly, some of the Korean students also decide to choose Academic English courses in the later period of their English study abroad for the same reason that they are more demanding than communicative English courses. Although they are required to spend the majority of their after-school time studying independently rather than immersing themselves in local culture, they recognize the self-efficacy of learning and satisfaction through intensive learning. It is a sort of paradox that Korean students who started their English study abroad with the hope of an “immersion” experience end up with being satisfied with intensive courses that require them to study as they did in South Korea.

5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the ways in which Korean students navigate and choose English educational commodities at school, and students’ consumerism has emerged as a key strategy for their educational investment. Their navigation of different language teaching programs and courses has exposed consumerist orientations and patterns of
regularly changing courses and of shifting programs to maximize rewards from their educational choice. The student consumerism mainly results from reconciling their concern over anticipated outcomes and dissatisfaction with their choices.

In their trajectories of English study abroad, the first dissatisfaction stems from low-intermediate communicative English courses that Korean students expected to offer lots of opportunities for, and a high quality of, authentic and natural verbal interaction. When the expectation turns out to be too optimistic, Korean students are more likely to navigate toward classes that look more promising in maximizing their rewards. In the process, the educational consumers evaluate teachers as facilitators or emotional supporters in classroom interaction, or certificates as documents transformable to an institutional form of cultural capital in the future job market. However, their class “shopping” confronts constant contradictions or dissatisfaction, as educational or cultural experiences in the school and beyond are not always tailored to their expectations and needs. As a result, Korean students justify their choices by re-signifying their learning experiences, for example, as valuable cultural experiences or intensive learning experiences.

Korean students’ class “shopping,” as well as the stratification of English speakers examined in Chapter 4, has shown their passion and striving for “better” English learning and “greater” English gains. Although such life strategies have driven them to continue their aim for skills development, at the same time, they generate emotional corollaries, such as stress and burnout. The next chapter will examine how Korean students deal with the negative affect in English study abroad and pursue enjoyment in a study-driven atmosphere.
CHAPTER SIX
ESCAPING FROM LEARNING: ENJOYING COSMOPOLITAN TOURISM

1 Introduction

Absenteeism—it is an issue that teachers, staff members, and managers at school, as well as Korean students, all take seriously. It is not rare to see Korean students, as well as students from other countries, frequently skip class. Even some students registered on the attendance list do not appear in a single class during a whole session. Robin, the teacher of the course I observed, told me that Korean male students tended to be absent from his classes more frequently than the female counterparts. As an example, at the time I was observing his course, one Korean male student had not shown up so far. When he checked the student’s record, Robin identified that this particular student had not attended any courses since the last session. Robin spoke of how he understood absenteeism; he believed that classes scheduled daily from 9 am to 4 pm were so intensive to make students tired of English learning. He went on to say that he also saw students’ behaviors of overdrinking and skipping school as typical of young adults. However, the sole and foremost concern for Robin and other teachers I met was that the continuation of absenteeism had the potential to seriously impede their students’ improvement of English (Field note, September 8, 2013).

Given the normative discourses and practices of South Korean English study abroad that have been examined in previous chapters, Korean students’ absenteeism is an interesting phenomenon. The normativity regulates their life and learning in the ways to make Korean learners do their best to improve English. Study abroad guidebooks state that students’ efforts of going to school regularly and taking courses seriously are obligations. Even in my informants’ words, the behavior of skipping classes is equal to “wasting money and tuition.” However, in reality, Korean students are not always motivated to learn English; they skip class to go shopping at the Eaton Centre, to drink coffee with their friends, or simply because they do not feel like going. Moreover, they do not go to school because of the hangovers they have from heavy drink the day before, waking up late in the morning, or simply because they feel tired. In some cases, students
go for a trip without giving any notification of their absence to the school. The case of Korean students’ absenteeism reveals a contradiction in students’ life that exists between their obsession over linguistic rewards from educational investment and desire for recreation, leisure, and enjoyment in a transnational space. In this chapter, I will examine a way of dealing with this contradiction between learning and play.

This chapter will investigate in what condition the leisurely aspects of English study abroad emerge and in which ways these aspects affect learners’ practices of cosmopolitan cultural consumption. In doing so, I try to avoid the simple argument that tourism is another benefit of international education. Although it is true that studying a language abroad is an educational investment in both linguistic and cultural capital, strategies for those forms of capital do not always unfold collaboratively, but rather are framed and articulated in certain fashions.

I view South Korean students’ absenteeism and, more broadly, cultural consumption as a practice of self-suspension and self-caring (Berlant, 2011; Song, 2014). In and through cultural consumptions, Korean students temporally suspend the dominant discourse of studying abroad which governs their life and study, and instead pursue enjoyment and pleasure in order to prevent burnout. Especially, as the imperative for students to seek “better” English speakers and communities causes intercultural fatigue in the learners’ life, the issue of how to enjoy cultural activities with whom arises as an important self-caring technique. In their cultural consumptions, thus, they establish and mobilize a distinctive mechanism of valuation of a variety of English and the speakers from what they usually do in educationally and instrumentally motivated situations (i.e., Chapters 4 and 5).

The need for self-suspension and self-caring in Korean learners’ educational investment evidently emerges in what my informants call samgaewŏl sullomp’ū (third-month slump)—a period of emotional difficulties that comes around the third month of overseas studies. The first part of this chapter will examine discourses and practices surrounding this period. My focus on this period does not mean that the emotional difficulties or the acts of suspension happen only in the third month. Rather, I believe that emotional struggles are activated at any temporal scale. However, as the third-month
slump is the most dramatic in intensity and effect, it is a moment that Korean students commonly shared with me.

Korean students’ self-suspension of linguistic instrumentalism over English learning consequently leads to more fun and enjoyable activities in students’ overseas life. While staying in Toronto, Korean students enjoy activities such as traveling, attending festivals, and going to parties. These activities always involve talking, teasing, eating, and drinking. Thus, these types of cultural consumption not only serve as Korean learners’ own technique of self-caring, but also contribute to constructing their version of cosmopolitan experiences. The second part of this chapter will examine how Korean students suspend institutional pressures, initiate self-planned leisure activities, and construct their meanings of cosmopolitanism through the experiences of travels. It should be noted that as Korean students’ experience in transnational spaces is mediated by social relations with ethnically diverse people, the grouping of friends and the choice of language become an important matter in enjoying their life. Thus, confronted intercultural fatigue and communicative misunderstandings give rise to the necessity for co-ethnic friends, which can be seen as a form of “self-segregation.” In this sense, Korean students’ trajectories of cultural consumption reveal that the key self-caring technique displayed among Korean students centers on the contestation between Korean and non-Korean students and the justification of national inclusion and exclusion.

2 “Third-month slump”: Affective conditions of cultural consumption

2.1 Frustration in English improvement

When a new session started in July 2013, Heejun looked less interested in his school life. He often told Jungmin during lunchtime that he did not feel like going to school those days and could not find a reason why he was studying English abroad. He felt as though he lost his orientation for studying. The next week, on Monday, I noticed that he was absent during lunchtime. While having lunch with me, Jungmin talked about Heejun’s heavy drinking the night before. He threw up on a TTC bus on his way home and passed out (insabulsŏng). Jungmin was sure that Heejun must have had a serious hangover. However, in the evening, Heejun joined a group going to watch a baseball
game between Toronto Blue Jays and LA Dodgers. Before the game, this group of Korean students met and had dinner at a Korean restaurant in China Town. When Heejun showed up in the restaurant, all of them made fun of him, recounting how he had behaved the night before. They giggled at him, and he felt embarrassed. Then, one Korean female student asked Heejun how long he had been studying abroad, and he responded, “This is my third month.” Nodding her head, she said, “that’s usually the time people begin to fall in a slump with their studies.” (Field note, July 22, 2013).

This episode informed me of what Korean study abroad students term as samgaewŏl sŭllŏmp’ŭ. It is a prevalent belief or a commonly shared experience among Korean students that most of them inevitably go through a slump around their third month. When I asked my informants what it meant to them and why they thought it emerged, they defined it as the moments when one feels:

• “Sick and tired of everything.”
• “Burnt out.”
• “Disinterested in English learning.”
• “Not motivated to study and use English.”

These self-definitions show that the third-month slump is an emotional response accompanied with helplessness and the lack of interest in one’s life and study in Toronto. Korean students usually perceive absenteeism as a characteristic behavior in their third-month slump. As a result, when Korean students discover that one of their Korean friends is absent, they tend to speculate that their friend is undergoing this emotional difficulty. However, they also believe that the friend will come back in one or two weeks, as they similarly have experienced those moments and were finally able to recover from their slump.

One of the assumed reasons for the third-month slump is that Korean students tend to stay in Toronto longer than other international language students. Compared to Latin American or European students, who have three months of English study abroad on average, Korean students plan to study for six to twelve months. Thus, it is assumed that

---

30 It was a big game for Koreans in Toronto, as it was announced that a Korean pitcher from the Dodgers, Ryu Hyun Jin, would be the starter. Koreans’ responses to the game can be read in an article on Yahoo Canada Sports, “Korean star Hyun-Jin Ryu steals spotlight from Yasiel Puig in Dodgers’ blowout win over Blue Jays.”
their slump comes when the “honeymoon period” in their overseas life ends. The end of this honeymoon period can be described as the moment when one gets used to a new environment and their everyday routine is repetitive. Moreover, as Robin mentioned above, Lingua City’s intensive schedule aggravates learners’ boredom and often burns out their passion for English learning. Resonating with an “acculturation model,” teachers and staff at school share these ideas. To address the students’ absenteeism, the school operates a vacation policy. Students are permitted to have a break of up to 3 weeks during their period of registration whenever they feel they need it.

However, students’ voices regarding samgaewǒl sǔllómp ’ǔ indicate that the perceived causes of helplessness, burn-out, and the lack of interest, are not only psychologically related with acculturation issues, but are also embedded in their hegemonic discourse of English study abroad. Several months later, when I conducted an interview with Heejun and asked him to elaborate on his experience of his slump period, he explained:

Excerpt 6.1: Interview with Heejun (February 2014)
Heejun: Around the third month, I was sick and tired of going to school. During that time, Korean students’ English proficiency reaches the high-intermediate level. However, at this time, there are smaller numbers of courses for that level and the teachers are not good. When I was in the low-intermediate level, there were a lot of courses, so when one course was not good, I could change it or find another class taught by another teacher. (…) Taking courses was not fun in those times. ((pause)) I reached the high intermediate level step-by-step, but I felt like that my English ability in the high-intermediate level was not much different from my ability in the low-intermediate level. Students from Europe just appeared (enrolled) and were assigned to the high-intermediate course I was taking. Above all, they were really good at speaking. (…) And even they were familiar with topics that the course covered. I didn’t know about these topics well enough, but my English also did not come out well from my mouth (I could not speak English proficiently). I don’t know whether this period was a slump or not, but I hated going to school during the height of that period. I thought, “my English sucks. This is bullshit! What am I doing here?”

Heejun first attributed the loss of interest in English learning to the lack of diverse language courses at school after his English level increased from low-intermediate to high-intermediate. As the school did not offer as many courses for high-intermediate
learners as they did for basic and intermediate learners, he had difficulty choosing interesting courses or preferable teachers. As he could not “shop” classes (Chapter 5), he assumed he lost his motivation for English learning. Following this reasoning, Heejun suggested another cause for his slump: the self-evaluation and self-criticism of his English ability.\(^{31}\) He sensed that his English was not getting better, even as his level of English increased. Moreover, while in the high-intermediate class, he felt that his English was still not good enough. This self-deprecation became more powerful when he saw his European classmates speaking English fluently after being placed in the class in their first month. As a result, Heejun felt that all of his efforts to improve his English were nullified. His morale was low, and his desire to attend class was low. He did not want to continue studying English anymore.

Heejun’s frustration and disappointment about his lack of English improvement remind us once again that for South Koreans, studying abroad is an educational investment in English capital. Because of this fact, most Korean students begin their study abroad with the “iron” will to study hard, in order to maximize linguistic gains (Chapter 2). For the first three months, they tend to do their best to attend classes from 9 am to 4 pm. Korean learners try to mingle with foreign classmates even though their insufficient English proficiency impedes English communication and often causes misunderstandings. They go to the library to study when they have free time. Also, they try to avoid meeting and speaking with Koreans as an attempt to be in English-only environments.

Despite such endeavors to improve English, they are confronted with the feeling that their English has not improved as much as they expected. This situation causes negative affects such as frustration and disappointment (Heejun), irritation (Changjung), the loss of orientation and demotivation (Sangwoo), and doubt on the effectiveness of studying English abroad (Dongil). Subsequently, they come to rethink and recalibrate the plans that they established before they left Korea.

---

\(^{31}\) Joseph Sung-Yul Park (2009a) poignantly argues that self-deprecation is the most salient language ideology in South Korean use and learning of the English language. His later works (Hiramoto & Park, 2014; Park, 2013, 2014, 2015) link this language ideology to neoliberal affects (e.g., anxiety) and material conditions (e.g., promotion at work) and reframe it within the concept of linguistic insecurity (cf. Bae, 2014; J. Cho, 2015).
2.2 Change in English learning attitudes: From obsession to relaxation

Although there are individual variances in term of the length and intensity of this educational slump, the phenomenon does not simply speak of Korean students’ hardship in living and studying abroad. More important is the fact that their vicissitude is related to the normative discourse that they should study harder and improve their English faster. However, this initial resolution which stems from this discourse of hard study often turns out to be unachievable largely due to students’ temporary positions within an English environment, limited access to local native English speakers, and racial and linguistic stereotypes (Chapter 4). In such circumstances, students confront two options: “study harder” or “take-it-easy.” On the one hand, they continue to maintain their efforts and struggles for English learning as much as possible, even though they realize how demanding it is. On the other hand, they accept the reality and compromise their initial preoccupation for English improvement. Most of my informants took the second option during the later part of their time in Toronto and escaped from their slump.

For example, Sangwoo’s recount of his experiences of his slump evidently offers details on the ways in which the “take-it-easy” option is justified. During his studies, Sangwoo experienced the slump twice and managed to escape both times. He stated that the first came around the third month and that it took one to two weeks to overcome:

Excerpt 6.2: Interview with Sangwoo (December 2013)
Sangwoo: I’m certain that it came three months after I arrived. This is common, so if you’re not aware of it, it means that you don’t know why you are staying in Toronto and why you’re studying English. (…) It came after three months, and it took one or two weeks to get out of. For one to two weeks, I just kept reminding myself that I stayed only for three months, so if I stayed more, my English would be better. I tried to get rid of the obsession that I should study English, and hang out and talk with friends naturally.

In his narrative, Sangwoo takes the slump as an inevitable moment for students who go abroad not to kill time and enjoy but to study and improve English. While positioning himself in the category of “good” students, Sangwoo talks about how he got

---

32 Some Korean study abroad students call this emotionally difficult period the “3-6-9 slump” as it comes every three month.
out of his slump. Above all, he tried to eliminate obsession over English learning. He
decided to go to school and meet friends “naturally” rather than to be too calculative on
encountered relationships and opportunities to maximize his English gains. While
reminding himself that he had spent only three months in Toronto, he was convinced that
his English would end up being better over time.

However, three months later, another Sangwoo faced another slump when he
began taking an “intensive” course:

Excerpt 6.3: Interview with Sangwoo (December 2013)
Sangwoo: The second slump. ((pause)) It came when I took IELTS course. I
skipped class a lot, but I tried not to cross the cut-off line. I took IELTS
classes in the morning, and then I got tired in the afternoon class, so I
skipped them, and then I skipped the morning IELTS classes, too. I skipped
all of my courses four times (this was the cut-off limit), and I collapsed
totally. The foundation fell (I was overwhelmed and burned out). I was able
to escape from the slump when I gave up my IELTS course. (…)
In Chull: Why did you struggle with the IELTS course?
Sangwoo: I was too enthusiastic about learning English. I took
communication courses for a couple of months and got enthusiastic. So I
decided to take the IELTS course. But if you are too ambitious, you may fail
(ŭiyogi kwahamyŏn purŏjinda). So I came to think that I should not be too
ambitious and I should be relaxed instead.

Among courses offered by the language school, the IELTS course is considered
one of the most demanding and intensive courses. Similar to the Cambridge English
certificate program (Chapter 5), the extent and amount of content covered in the course
are much larger than other courses. Sangwoo started the course with an expectation that
he could learn more in an IELTS course and that it could lead to a dramatic improvement
in his English, but in the end, he became overwhelmed. Sangwoo ended up failing to pass
his IELTS course due to his low rate of attendance. Sangwoo changed his courses the
next month and was finally able to escape from his slump. He thought that his failure in
the IELTS course was due to his ambition. Consequently, he concluded that he should be
more relaxed and choose less demanding and more enjoyable courses.

While undergoing his slump, Sangwoo’s attitude toward English learning changed
from obsession and ambition to relaxation and compromise. He equated his obsessive
ambition over English learning with his anxiety over the rate of English improvement,
which lowered his driving force for learning English. As a result, Sangwoo realized that he should become less instrumentally motivated and disciplined in order to persist through his overseas studies. Essentially, it is in this context that a range of cultural and leisure activities are re-signified as important elements in Korean students’ experiences of educational investment. These activities are considered not only opportunities for practicing English communication skills in an everyday context, but also moments of self-suspension and self-caring.

Such realization of the need for self-suspension has several consequences for South Korean learners’ trajectories regarding English learning. First of all, they admit that it is tremendously hard or almost impossible to follow advice and suggestions made in the guidebooks and in person regarding “successfully” studying English abroad. The suggested goals include the perfect rate of attendance, the completion of multiple certification courses, the building of friendships with locals, the participation in local festivals and volunteer events, and travels for cultural experiences. Thus, they decide to choose and concentrate on one or two goals within their original framework. For example, Jungmin tried not to be absent from school even on the day after he hung out with Koreans and drank heavily. His primary goal of successful English learning was connected to a high rate of attendance, and he attended 90% of his courses by the end of his study period. On the other hand, Dongil said to me that he “decided to enjoy life here” (Interview, August 2013). He focused on intermingling with non-Korean classmates, in particular, Japanese students, because of his proficiency in the Japanese language and understandings of their culture. Moreover, he believed that hanging out with Japanese students would give him more chances to speak English than remaining to meet with his Korean friends. Because of his goals, he was less concerned about his attendance and preferred to attend inter-ethnic events. Meanwhile, Minsik shifted his focus from English learning to overseas experiences. He reset his goals from studying English hard and attending classes perfectly to going on trips as much as possible. Additionally, he looked to experience cultural activities in Toronto even though his relationships were mostly formed with Koreans. These recalibrations of their plans for studying English abroad were often justified by their self-identification as non-native English speakers: “I am not a native English speaker, so I cannot be like them for only one year” (Minsik, Interview,
January 2014. Thus, these students assumed that, rather than struggling with the unachievable goal of being native-like, it would be better to compromise their will to learn and instead enjoy their life overseas. In this end, the space for cosmopolitan enjoyment came to be opened up more widely.

3 Intercultural fatigue in inter-ethnic tourism

3.1 Package tourism and artificial intermingling: Trip to Quebec

The discourse of tourism appears in almost every stage of studying English abroad. Commercial materials and brochures, as well as guidebooks, feature tourist locations based on geographical and cultural characteristics of a specific city. For instance, in a workshop for potential English study abroad learners, Toronto was introduced not only as a prominent city in terms of its economy and education, but also as a multicultural metropolis with diverse cultural opportunities. Additionally, Toronto was highlighted for being in a region that was close to other metropolitan cities in Canada (e.g., Montreal) and in the Eastern U.S. (e.g., New York City and Washington D.C.) (Field note, April 12, 2013).

Students are also exposed to tourism commodities once they arrive in Toronto and begin their study. Branches of study abroad agencies display flyers and posters offering package tours sold by Korean travel agencies (Field note, April 10, 2013) (cf. Kwak & Hiebert, 2007). Additionally, new students of Lingua City encounter tourism commodities during their orientation of the school. At the end of the orientation, time is allotted for a manager of a travel agency to introduce his company to new students and promote travel and event commodities tailored to international students (Field note, August 12, 2013, October 7, 2013). Furthermore, employees of the travel agency visit Lingua City during lunchtime every Monday, or every weekday before long weekends or

---

33 During fieldwork, I came across two travel agencies that mainly targeted international students in language schools. Employees of these travel agencies visited language schools and sold their tourism commodities to students at schools. The majority of the employees were former students who were now doing their internship in the companies. It shows that this tourism industry mobilizes employees’ social networks and linguistic resources for their service. Such strategies of the tourism business sector indicate how the language teaching industry can open up a niche market and how it is connected to other industries within Canada’s economy.
holiday seasons, in order to sell their commodities on site. Even though the travel packages differ by season, they commonly include: “French Canada” (Ottawa, Montreal, and Quebec City), New York City, Washington D.C., Chicago, as well as day trips to Niagara Falls, Algonquin Park, and Canada’s Wonderland (amusement park).

During their stay in Toronto, most Korean students in the school tended to sign up for the “French Canada” package as their first out-of-Ontario trip. This was in part because the travel agency service was most accessible to new students who did not have enough information to plan their own trip, and in part, because it satisfied their need to mingle with non-Koreans and use English in leisure activities. The “French Canada” package cost less than $250 CAD, including a room for four persons, coach transportation, and guided tours. Seemingly, the travel package had strong points such as its reasonable price, an itinerary covering most of the famous tourist sites, and the assumed benefit of inter-ethnic mingling. However, my informants reported that the travel package did not fully satisfy their travel expectations.

The first reason for their dissatisfaction was their passive role within the very structure of package tour; a tour guide led groups of tourists through a repeated pattern of riding and viewing. Jungmin stated: “the trip to Quebec was less impressive than I had expected, or somewhat disappointing. It was just like going and viewing [famous] buildings or something. Nothing was very memorable” (Field note, July 22, 2013). Similarly, Hyunbin told me that the package trip was intended “not so much to meet people as to drag us around sightseeing” (Interview, October 2013). Such explanations reveal that students experience the banality of package tours that often fail to derive enjoyment as much as young tourists anticipate (cf. Tucker, 2007).

Another reason that the package tour to Quebec was negatively reviewed was that it also failed to provide students with opportunities to intermingle effectively. Korean student-tourists felt uncomfortable and unnatural being mixed with students of other nationalities whom they had not met before. Therefore, the package trip often ended up being a time spent with other close Korean friends and thus separating them from other ethnic groups on the tour. Dongil recounted a case in which he experienced such a situation:
Excerpt 6.4: Interview with Dongil (October 2013)
Dongil: When I went for a trip to Quebec, I mixed with Korean and Japanese students.
In Chull: Did it work?
Dongil: Ah, it failed. I went with four Korean guys, Jungmin, Dongseok, Heejun and me, and five girls.
In Chull: Using the travel agency?
Dongil: Yeah. I needed to get a group of four for the quad room option. The five girls were three Japanese and two Koreans. Ah, it was a failure \textit{(mangaetta)}. I thought that all nine of us would hang out with each other naturally, but we did not know each other. ((pause)) The three of them (Jungmin, Dongseok, and Heejun) were walking ahead far away first, and the remaining five (the female students) were behind them. I stood in the middle.
In Chull: In that situation, didn’t you usually end up speaking in Korean?
Dongil: Yes, we did. They (the three Korean male students) spoke in Korean. Then, they couldn’t communicate with the Japanese female students. I was really in trouble. I thought that I would not go on a trip like this again because we weren’t close and didn’t want to be close. ((pause)) This was a problem.

As the quote shows, Dongil organized a group of his classmates to go on a trip to Quebec, using the package tour offered by a travel agency for international students. As he needed three male students more to select the quad accommodation option, which was the cheapest, he proposed to Jungmin, Heejun, and Dongseok, Jungmin’s homestay roommate, to join him. Dongil also recruited five female students consisting of three Japanese friends and two Koreans, with the expectation that such intersexual and inter-ethnic composition would “naturally” bring fun as well as talk in English. However, by his account, his expectations turned out to be overly optimistic. Describing the trip as “mangaetta” (it was a failure), Dongil admitted that simply putting students in an inter-ethnic situation, or “mixing” in his words, did not bring about the expected intercultural exchanges and friendship building that he was looking for. Rather, what he faced during his trip was a clear separation of the Korean male students from the female company, their use of the Korean language, and unnatural atmospheres in the group, which Dongil had to struggle to deal with during the entire trip. This experience led Dongil to feel that intermingling might only work when the participants were already familiar with each other or at least willing to connect and talk with others. Otherwise, he concluded, the
psychological burden to initiate talk and to pretend to be jovial with strangers could be too heavy.

As shown through these examples, Korean students’ experience of package trips makes them demystify the promise of inter-ethnic intermingling and its concomitant use of English in tours. Moreover, the pattern of package tours accompanied with their tight schedules, which positions students as passive tourists, fails to offer Korean students with more initiated and enjoyable travel moments. As a result, Korean students’ orientation toward travel becomes more independent and small-grouped.

3.2 Independent travel and the burden of intercultural communication: Camping in Algonquin Park

Spending more time in Toronto, Korean English study abroad learners become familiar with Canadian social and cultural knowledge, conventions, and manuals. Their improved English ability also encourages them to communicate with local businesspersons. In the middle phase of their overseas stay, they take on “risks” such as changing their mobile service providers from Phonebox, the Korean company that their study abroad agencies recommend (Chapter 4), to Canadian ones such as Wind Mobile, which they find provide more reasonable plans. Another noticeable “risk-taking” is renting a car. It is bureaucratically possible for Korean citizens to exchange their South Korean driver license for an Ontario license without any examinations or tests. Of course, for them, there are a few challenges such as searching and renting from a local rental car service (e.g., Discount, Enterprise, or Dollars), as well as learning local traffic regulations. However, the greatest merit overriding these challenges is the fact that, if one rents a car, one can travel more freely. As such, some Korean students obtain Ontario driver licenses, rent a car, and go for trips to iconic tourist sites in Ontario such as Niagara Falls, Algonquin Park, and Blue Mountain.34

Among these kinds of trips, going camping in Algonquin Park is one of the most independent forms of travel because it requires travel-goers to plan and prepare all

---

34 These sites attract international students for different reasons. Niagara Falls is the most popular one-day trip site year round, as the Falls is not only close to Toronto but also can be enjoyed in any season. Blue Mountain, and other ski resorts, draw winter-sports lovers. Students are attracted to Algonquin Park for camping from late Spring to early Fall and for viewing fall colors in autumn.
aspects of their trip by themselves: renting a car and camping gear, booking a campsite, organizing a menu plan and buying ingredients, etc. Since Korean students believe that sharing and completing these jobs asks for effective communication and strong membership participation, Korean students usually invite to the trip those who are in a close relationship with them. In most cases, the type of friends that are invited are co-ethnic friends. This can be exemplified by a trip organized by Jungmin.

In early October 2013, Jungmin proposed to go camping in Algonquin Park with his Korean male friends whom he played baseball with every weekend. Dongil and I joined the camping trip as I often participated in the baseball games and Dongil wanted to experience camping and view the acclaimed fall colors of the Park. As the most senior student in the group and organizer of the trip, Jungmin distributed tasks to younger members and monitored their progress regularly. With his efforts, camping was successful without any issues. During the one-night trip, as planned, we played volleyball on the beach adjacent to the campsite, had a barbecue with samgyŏpsal (pork belly), and drank soju (a Korean spirit), beer and finally p’ok’t’anju (a Korean cocktail of beer and whiskey or soju).

In an interview with Jungmin a few days after camping, I asked him why he proposed and organized the trip only with Korean men, even though it opposed the dominant imperative to mingle with international students in a study abroad context.\(^{35}\) His quick reply to this question was quite straightforward: “This is because I think that traveling should always be fun.” In his elaboration that followed, Jungmin argued that the fun of travel was increased by intra-ethnic mingling and spoiled by intercultural fatigue:

Excerpt 6.5: Interview with Jungmin (October 2013)
Jungmin: I am comfortable traveling with Koreans. You know, there is something like, foreigners’ sentiments (chŏngsŏ). It is different from ours. (pause) In the case of making sleeping arrangements, it seems to me that Koreans’ sentiments are quite obvious and unique. When traveling, for example, we just share one dish, like scooping ramen from one large bowl with their own spoons. But if foreign friends say that it’s disgusting, I will get upset, because I think that travel should be fun.

\(^{35}\) I recognize that this grouping for the camping trip is intersected not only with ethnicity but also with gender. As mentioned in the introduction, this Korean male group was formed on the basis of Korean masculinity, in particular, Korean militarism (Introduction).
In this example, Jungmin straightforwardly says that traveling with his intra-ethnic friends is more comfortable, assuming that Korean sentiment (chŏngsŏ) is “obvious” and “unique.” What he means by chŏngsŏ is a part of Korean cultural habitus which is embodied and performed in travel settings; for example, how to sleep and how to eat while traveling. Further, Jungmin supposes that, if these culturally embodied acts are negatively perceived by accompanying foreign friends, he would be embarrassed and thus not fully enjoy his travels. His assumption reveals that he draws the ethnic boundary of Koreans versus non-Koreans and exploits intercultural differences as a cause of emotional and interpersonal burdens, an issue that he imagines should be addressed in travel.

The idea that intercultural differences trigger intercultural fatigue is often justified by the problem of language barrier among co-travelers, particularly when the ethnic boundary defining cultural differences turns out to be arbitrary:

Excerpt 6.6: Interview with Jungmin and Hyunbin (October 2013)

Hyunbin: This is my idea regarding overnight traveling. We should go for a trip with like-minded people (maŭm manmnŭn saram), whoever they are, whether they are foreigners or Koreans. Is it like, are there some Koreans who are not like-minded or some foreigners who are much more like-minded? Even if you go for a trip with foreigners, if they are like-minded people, you will be comfortable because you know how to deal with them. This is most important.

Jungmin: If I go to meet and have a barbecue with foreigners, I don’t care about the intercultural difference. I also don’t care when I drink liquor with them. But traveling is something different. How can I put it? I have to spend all my time with them, and a conflict can arise because of this. I have to solve the dispute, but I already feel bad. This is a waste of time because I can’t address misunderstandings quickly. There is a difference between speaking in Korean without any hesitation and starting to speak in English.

36 Although the situation that he draws on is imaginative in this account, it has some experiential roots. He had the experience of camping with Japanese friends in Algonquin Park in late August 2013. Jungmin joined it, as one of Dongseok’s Korean friends invited Dongseok and Jungmin. Although he said that the landscape in Algonquin Park was fantastic, he hinted that the Japanese friends felt uncomfortable with the way that he and his Korean friends did or suggested doing camping activities such as sleeping and eating (Field note, August 20, 2013).

37 This interview was conducted mostly with Jungmin, but Hyunbin and Dongseok were present, as they had plans after the interview. While Dongseok stayed silent during the interview, Hyunbin often intervened my talk with Jungmin in order to add his opinion to it.
Even if a foreign friend says that he or she understands what I mean, I still doubt whether he or she is truly all right. And when I have a complaint, how can I express it? These are such issues of traveling with people who do not speak the same language. If you want to be free of such matters, it is much better to go for a trip with Koreans. Of course, your English will get worse (*matt’aengi kada*).

While Jungmin is talking about the intercultural fatigue in inter-ethnic travel, Hyunbin intervenes the interview and expresses his option. Hyunbin highlights that discomfort in an inter-ethnic travel setting originates more from personal differences and relational chemistry rather than cultural and collective differences. In response to Hyunbin’s thought, Jungmin contends that traveling with like-minded foreign friends can lead to trouble due to communication issues. He supposes that traveling and hanging out every day with non-Korean friends can be differently burdensome in terms of interpersonal relations. While such activities as going to a park for a BBQ are simply temporary gatherings for fun with a shared and planned goal of the activity, traveling requires a sort of membership and mutual understanding among co-travelers, as they have to spend all their time together and appropriately address issues which often arise unexpectedly. What is necessary for resolving misunderstandings is a pragmatic knowledge of communication involving not only the appropriateness of language usage but also cultural specificity between interlocutors.

In this interview, Jungmin ensures that he has the pragmatic competence of talking about a conflict with Koreans. However, this is not the case when he should speak to his international friends in English; he has to struggle to find polite ways of talking about conflicts and complaints that arise. Even if he succeeds in expressing himself, he would still feel skeptical about whether or not the interlocutor fully understands him because the language mediating the communication is English, a language that is not the first languages of both speakers. Stressing the interlinguistic differences, Jungmin undermines Hyunbin’s stance and maintains his argument that inter-ethnic travel causes intercultural fatigue. He concludes with the view that to avoid such hassles and enjoy travel fully, traveling with like-minded Korean persons is a much better choice, even if the use of the Korean language during the trip can lead to a negative effect on their English.
Generally, Korean students tend to take weekend excursion trips when they need a break from their school life. In such trips, they want to be free from the situation that a greater amount of their life energy is mobilized and consumed, and to relieve their stress and enjoy light-hearted moments. However, they find that the presence of non-Korean students requires additional intercultural and emotional resources to accommodate them in the leisure activity. For example, they should try to use English all the time, and consider intercultural differences and so-called global norms of interpersonal behaviors. Thus, this situation causes intercultural fatigue. Due to this fatigue, some Korean study abroad students indicate that they feel exhausted when they come back from time spent with non-Korean friends (“chini ppajida”). Moreover, they bluntly describe this situation as not leisurely at all (“nonūn kōdi nonūn kōdi anida”). Such affective packages of tension and fatigue in intercultural relationships enable Korean students to justify co-ethnic grouping and pursue comfort in leisure activities such as traveling.

4 Break in comfort zone: Cosmopolitan experience in an intra-ethnic independent tour

4.1 Korean-style travel to New York City: Budget and itinerary

The conception of tourism as a practice of “making space” (Thurlow & Jaworski, 2014; Urry, 2005) suggests that tourism is not simply an act of visiting a geographical site, but rather a performance of imagining and valuing the site. Essentially, the performances affect, and are affected by, the process of mediatization, mediation, and remediation (Thurlow & Jaworski, 2014). In other words, the choices and performances regarding where to go, what to do and how to do it, should be understood as discursive effects of a certain tourist culture and as the manifestation of collective imagination and habitus. This point suggests that certain groups of tourists share patterns and ideologies of tourism that constitute specific ways of planning and taking a tour—that is, “the normative ways of being a tourist” (Thurlow & Jaworski, 2014, p. 468).

When it comes to Korean transnational students in Toronto, the cultural specificity of their overseas tourism is evidently revealed in their travel projects for New York City (NYC). Because of the symbolic value of NYC in global tourism and Toronto’s geographic proximity to NYC, most study abroad students and temporary
residents in Toronto plan a trip to NYC. This fact is also reflected in English study abroad guidebooks, which mention that the convenient nature of a trip to NYC is one benefit of studying English in Toronto. The following description is an excerpt taken from a guidebook. The guidebook includes a special section about traveling to NYC, preceded by general information on studying English abroad in Toronto:

New York is a city which English study abroad students leaving for Eastern Canada should visit. It costs one or two million Won to fly from Korea to NYC, but you can get a one-dollar bus ticket from Toronto if you book it in advance during certain promitional periods. You can get on a night coach in Toronto, take a sleep [on the coach] and then enjoy the morning in NYC with bagels and coffee. NYC, the best city in the world, tempts strangers into a number of people (tempts tourists into New Yorkers), spectacular urban landscapes, and a flood of tourist sites and attractions (A hundred ways to save a million Won while studying English abroad in Canada, p. 752).

This description stresses that the trip to NYC is a must-do for Korean students in Toronto. The guidebook states the reasons for the trip: budgetary concern and Western/postcolonial cosmopolitanism. It is not difficult to imagine how and why NYC represents Western cosmopolitanism given its images circulating within global mediascape (Appadurai, 1996), for example, TV shows like Sex and the City, and Friends. More interestingly, this excerpt highlights that student-tourists can enjoy a budgetary benefit by traveling from Toronto to NYC, compared to the case that one departs from South Korea. Because of their concerns about spending excessive money in this overseas education (Chapter 2), in fact, making a budgetary trip is one of the priorities of South Korean students’ NYC travel.

In Toronto, there are two options for a trip to NYC available to Korean students. Some students use Korean travel agencies which offer coach transportations and accommodations with a reasonable price (approximately, $300 USD in 2013 and 2014). Agencies are able to provide lower prices because they run their own coaches and book hotels located in New Jersey instead of Manhattan. The students who want to avoid skipping classes or to minimize adverse effects of the trip on their English study tend to

---

38 The must-do trip to NYC proved true in my fieldwork. During my research, I never met a student who had not been in NYC.
choose the travel agency option and go for a trip during the weekend. However, the
greater number of Korean students prefer to have an independent travel experience as
described in the above guidebook. They book a round trip ticket on a night bus going to
NYC via Buffalo, using Megabus, a coach service offering “low-cost express bus service
to and from New York City.” Additionally, Korean students book accommodation
through a website containing Korean-run guesthouses called Hanintel. In comparison to
the first option, this backpack-style trip is not only less costly, but also allows Korean
students to enjoy NYC more freely.

Although Korean young tourists try to downsize the total cost of the trip, it does
not mean that they always minimize it; they are well-aware that several activities and
visits require large expenses. As a result, the way that they try to make their trip more
“cost-efficient” is to create a strategically thought-out itinerary. Before going on the trip,
they do research through travelogues regarding where and what to visit, see, do, and
eat—Thurlow and Jaworski (2014) call spectacular self-locations—, how to move from
one location to another time-efficiently, and how to save on admission fees and activities.

In mid-September 2013, I joined Jungmin and Dongseok’s trip to NYC via
Washington D.C. Disappointed with his trip to Quebec, Jungmin did not have the mind to
have a trip for a while. Instead, he preferred to play basketball and baseball with his
Korean friends and drink after the game. However, around August, he thought that it
would be good to go for a trip to NYC before moving to Vancouver in October.
Moreover, during that time, his resolution for perfect attendance was less affirmative. As
that month was his last in Toronto, he wanted to experience what he had not done so far
or what he could not do in Vancouver. Thus, Jungmin, Dongseok, and I decided to go to
NYC in mid-September, after Dongseok’s final exam in his language school.

Table 6.1 summarizes the itinerary of our trip and provides information on how
we saved on travel expenses. It shows two strategies for creating a low-budgeted and
efficient trip: geographical grouping and minimization of paid tourist activities. First, by
grouping tourist sites by geographical proximity, we tried to visit as many places as
possible on a single day. The grouping strategy also enabled us to save transportation
costs (e.g., NYC subway fare) since we walked between the areas. The effort in saving
transportation costs, along with accommodation, is key to Korean students’ views on
budgetary backpacking. We also tried to find and happened to stay in a guesthouse in midtown Manhattan, where a number of iconic tourist places are located within walking distances. As we actually walked a lot, we often said during the trip that it was like haenggun (military marching).\textsuperscript{39} Second, we preferred to visit public and free-admission buildings and monuments that positioned tourists as viewers rather than doers. In the case of paid admission, we searched for cheaper options; for example, combo tickets to the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) and Top of the Rock\textsuperscript{40} and rush tickets for a Broadway musical. As the commercially operated ferries to the Statue of Liberty were all expensive, we followed a Korean travel blogger’s suggestion of taking a public ferry to Staten Island, although we ended up taking the wrong ferries twice and had to settle for seeing the Statue from a distance.

Table 6.1

\textit{Itinerary of Jungmin’s Trip to NYC}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Locations</th>
<th>Saving tactics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sep 20 (Fri) Evening</td>
<td>Toronto coach terminal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 21 (Sat) Morning</td>
<td>Washington D.C. Union Station</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afternoon</td>
<td>U.S. Capitol</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White House</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lincoln Memorial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Korean War Veterans Memorial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Washington Monument</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening</td>
<td>Washington D.C. Union Station</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night</td>
<td>Guesthouse in Manhattan, NYC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 22 (Sun) Morning</td>
<td>Time Square Charging Bull</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afternoon</td>
<td>Brooklyn Bridge</td>
<td>Taking free ferries to see the Manhattan skyline and the Statue of Liberty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pier 11 to Ikea Brooklyn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Battery Maritime Building to Governors Island</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{39} The meaning of this word, haenggun, is implicated in Korean men’s shared compulsory military experiences. As a part of military training, Korean men in service are commanded to complete the mock operation of moving from one site to another. They usually march 15 km daily in full gear.

\textsuperscript{40} For Korean tourists to NYC, whether or not to purchase an NYC city pass is an important matter that they consider before the trip. For example, Dongil decided to buy a NYC city pass and tried to visit as many places as possible covered by the pass.
### Table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evening</td>
<td>Century 21 (outlet retailer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night</td>
<td>9/11 Memorial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-site free ticket</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 23 (Mon)</td>
<td>Morning The Love Sculpture MoMA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Afternoon MoMA Central Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evening/Night Chelsea Market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 24 (Tue)</td>
<td>Morning Broadway Shake Shack Burger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Afternoon Apple Store Grand Central Terminal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>United Nations Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The New York Public Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bryant Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evening/Night Music Box Theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rush and partial view ticket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 25 (Wen)</td>
<td>Morning Top of the Rock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Afternoon Flatiron Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Macy’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evening/Night Megabus bus stop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 26 (Thu)</td>
<td>Morning Toronto coach terminal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In a debriefing interview after the NYC trip, Jungmin was satisfied with saving quite a lot:

**Excerpt 6.7: Interview with Jungmin (October 2013)**

Jungmin: In fact, it was annoying (*kwich’anta*) to prepare a low budget and tightly planned independent trip. In some cases, using a travel agency would be cheaper, and in other situations, it would be more expensive, but for an NYC trip, the difference in travel expense was not just $100 more or less. It really depended on how we planned for our independent travel. That is, we went for a trip to NYC inexpensively (*chóryŏmhage*). It cost around $700 only.
Jungmin stressed that compared to the package trip option, his independent travel to NYC was much more budgetary. This is because he planned the trip strategically in terms of cost and itinerary, although it was quite annoying to consider all influential factors.

Although I did not obtain information on the travel patterns and cultures of other ethnic groups regarding a trip to NYC, Dongil’s case of an inter-ethnic trip to NYC shows that Korean style of traveling independently with a focus on a reasonable budget and a tight plan is not always desirable for students of other ethnic backgrounds. Dongil went for a trip to NYC with Takeshi, his Japanese male friend. They were close to each other as they took the same classes and frequently hung out together. Although they decided to go to NYC together, Dongil took the lead in planning the trip. As other Korean friends did, he also booked a Korean guesthouse through Hanintel, searched for must-go places, and created a tight itinerary. However, Dongil recounted that, in the course of the trip, he had trouble with Takeshi because of the daily plans and accommodations. While Dongil tried to visit tourist places as many as possible with an NYC City Pass, Takeshi wanted to have a relaxed time there. Moreover, Takeshi kept complaining about the quality of the Korean guesthouse. This made Dongil feel bad because he sacrificed the quality of accommodation for a more budgetary and sightseeing-intensive travel. He had assumed that if they traveled time-tightly, they would not have stayed that much in the guesthouse. Such conflicts between Dongil and Takeshi ended up with them seeing NYC separately and becoming estranged after the trip. A few months later, after experiencing this conflict with Takashi in their NYC trip, Dongil decided to travel alone on his next trip to Chicago, because of his realization that non-Korean friends had different travel purposes and expectations.

4.2 Mediatized, (re)mediated, and embodied cosmopolitan experiences in NYC

Korean students’ normative ways of planning and performing their independent travels to NYC, that is, budgetary and itinerary-tight travel, invariably condition one’s experiences and memories of traveling in the cosmopolitan city. Given that tourist experiences and memories are mediated by the sense of vision, what matters in their trip
in NYC is what to see and how to see it. Furthermore, it is important to generate evidence that they visit the key tourist places—that is, what is called the hermeneutic cycle (Urry, 2002 as cited in Thurlow & Jaworski, 2014; Urry & Larsen, 2011). Thus, this section will examine Korean young tourists’ itineraries in more detail in light of why they select and visit certain places in NYC and how they “perform” in those places.

My experience of traveling with Jungmin and Dongseok in NYC and observations of photos posted by my informants on Facebook hint at an anthropological gaze of consuming places in NYC (Urry, 2005), or the hermeneutic cycle, among Korean students who experienced NYC travels. John Urry (2005) defines an anthropological gaze in tourism as the way “individual visitors scan a variety of sights/sites and is able to locate them interpretatively within a historical array of meanings and symbols” (p. 21). Thus, South Korean students’ creation of an itinerary for their self-planned NYC travels may explicate their situated interpretations of places within NYC and reconstructions of their experiences there.

Above all, Korean students’ anthropological gaze is post-colonial, guided by the central position of NYC in the global flow of economy and culture. They desire to see iconic buildings and attractions that represent the cosmopolitanism of NYC. As seen in Table 6.1, most of the locations that Jungmin and Dongseok visited, such as Time Square, Wall Street, Rockefeller Center, MoMA, Brooklyn Bridge, and so forth, may be categorized as examples of a post-colonial gaze. In those locations, Korean students, as well as tourists from all over the world, take photos to reify cosmopolitan images of NYC and to celebrate their presence. Through these actions, they embody the preformed images that NYC is the most developed and cosmopolitan city (Bui, Wilkins, & Lee, 2013; Fujita, 2008), as described above in the guidebook.

However, the NYC urban landscapes and tourists’ presences there often stimulate post-colonial inferiority within them. For instance, Jungmin’s explanation of his experiences of traveling in NYC shows this:

---

41 Urry and Larsen (2011) argue that the key medium of the hermeneutic circle is photography. They point out that photography plays not only a representational role in preforming tourists’ experiences but also a performative role in understanding places of which photos are taken and embodying spatial experiences in their tours. In this sense, photos that my informants posted on Facebook were a window through which I could observe and make sense of their tour experiences in NYC.
Excerpt 6.8: Interview with Jungmin (October 2013)
Jungmin: Before I went to New York City, I didn’t have the mind to visit it, but now I have come to understand why people keep talking about New York. While looking around, I could compare New York with my country (urinara). I discovered that my country looked better in this part, whereas New York City looked more developed in that part. I wished that my country would change this way or that way. I would have felt New York through photos of it, but the fact that I was there in time and space was stimulating.

For Jungmin, his trip to NYC was an experience of witnessing NYC’s material and symbolic superiority. Through his experience, he could understand why people desired to tour, study, or live there. His appreciation of NYC as a global, cosmopolitan and developed city triggered a post-colonial mindset in his ways of comparing cultural elements between NYC and South Korea. Although the comparison is not necessarily set up as a binary precept of the developed West and the developing East (“my country looked better in this part”), it presupposes the longstanding model of development that Asian countries should “learn” and emulate the West—that is, post-colonial modernity in East Asia (cf. Barlow, 1997).

Most interesting in Jungmin’s accounts is that his experiences are mediated by his desire to “be there” in NYC. His experience is valuable, as it is believed that the trip provided a first-hand and embodied experience of the West, as opposed to mediatized experiences (e.g., viewing images and representations within mass media). As Korean English study abroad students have already consumed images of NYC circulated and remediated in various media spaces, what they ultimately hope for is their own experience of “being there” and narrative on those experiences. Similar to Japanese youth in Fujita’s (2008) study who “do not long for ‘America’ but long for ‘living in American’” (p. 222), Korean students’ yearning to “being there” and “feeling it” shows that they value more situated and embodied forms of cultural experiences. In fact, in late December 2013, I witnessed a number of Korean students going to NYC to see New Year’s events (e.g., Dick Clark’s New Year’s Rockin’ Eve). Some of them had already had traveled to NYC. Most of them were aware that NYC must be crowded with tourists and that they would see the event at Time Square only from a distance. Nonetheless, they said that they wanted to be at that globally famous event and to feel the atmospheres.
Their desire for embodied cosmopolitan experiences of the Western global city is not confined to the Occidental and post-colonial reflection of Western culture, or the post-colonial gaze. Another interesting characteristic of Korean young travelers in NYC is that locally constructed representations of NYC also profoundly affect their choices of spectacular locations. The database of evaluations of tourist sites made by Korean independent travelers and the media representations of Korean celebrities who travel or stay in NYC have tremendous influences on Korean citizen’s imaginations of NYC. Through travel bloggers, travel guidebooks written by Korean former travelers, and TV shows featuring overseas travels, localized images and information are produced and circulated. As a result, the post-colonial gaze is deflected or supplemented by the localized gaze that brings locally constructed images and meanings of NYC tourist places.

Tourist places dominantly mediated by the localized gaze are restaurants, cafes, and bistros, that is, “culinary journey” (Duruz, 2009).\(^{42}\) Korean young tourists in NYC include matchip (culinary places) in their tour plans as an important element, and before their travel, they spend some time finding information not only on what to see but also on what to eat in NYC. Their decision on restaurants or bars mostly depends on other Koreans’ evaluations of the foods based on their Korean habitual tastes. Figure 6.1 is a memo posted in the guesthouse that Jungmin, Dongseok, and I stayed in during our NYC trip. The list of matchip includes various world cousins and foods; Western, Japanese, and Korean. These foods (burgers, steaks, Japanese ramen, and macaron) are quite familiar and common in South Korea in comparison to other ethnic foods. Therefore, Koreans have a sense of taste for enjoying and evaluating these types of food. Indeed, while preparing our trip to NYC, we were told a lot by other Korean students that we should go to eat burgers and fries in Shake Shack Burger—top of the list in Figure 6.1. On our trip, we did visit it and ate burgers from a set menu. This was the only culinary location that we had planned to visit (See Table 6.1). Of course, we all appreciated the food’s “great” taste.

\(^{42}\) The culinary tours are mediated by the sense of taste as well as the sense of vision. Urry and Larsen (2011) revises the concept of the tourist gaze as multisensual, while maintaining that the vision organizes other senses.
Figure 6.1 List of Matchip in NYC

In the list shown in Figure 6.1, what needs further investigating is Bann, a Korean restaurant. It is not the case that the Korean restaurant was recommended to satisfy Korean tourists’ culinary sense for authentic Korean foods (actually, it is a localized Korean restaurant). Rather, the short description of the restaurant on the list is telling; it is the place “where Muhandojŏn was shot.” In other words, it becomes a famous tourist place among Koreans, as it was a place featured in the very famous Korean TV show.

In fact, the episodes of Muhandojŏn shot in NYC significantly mediate Korean youth’s travel experiences there. The basic format of Muhandojŏn (Infinite Challenge), which is called kungmin yenŭng (a national entertainment show), is a reality show where a group of entertainers are asked to complete a seemingly impossible mission. As the members of this show visited NYC to complete missions (e.g., introducing Korean food to New Yorkers, taking photos for a 2010 New Year calendar, featuring in Dick Clark’s New Year’s Rockin’ Eve with the Korean music artist, Psy) over several episodes, the places they visited and the places they ate at became famous to Korean viewers. In particular, the episodes of nyuyok t’ŭkchip (New York Special), aired in November and December 2009, are a must-see for young Koreans who are planning a trip to NYC, and some of them actually include the places that Infinite Challenge members visited in their

Matchip that you must visit!

1. Shake Shack Burger
2. Peter Luger: Steak House
3. Kenka: Japanese Izakaya (small-sized pub)
4. Sapporo: Japanese ramen
5. Bann: where Muhandojŏn (a Korean reality TV show) was shot
6. Macaron
itinerary. In the 180th and 181st episodes, the members were given a mission to serve Korean food, which they had to cook, to New Yorkers. The restaurant where they carried out the mission was Bann, which was introduced by the TV program as the most famous and upscale Korean restaurant in NYC.

Another place that became famous to Koreans was a café, Think Coffee, near Washington Square. In the episode 182, the Korean entertainers were given a “difficult” mission to place an order at Think Coffee: “esūp’ūreso t’u sadūl nōhūn naji saiţū tuyurat’e, kŏp’um yakkan, k’ŏp tugae, k’ŏp holtŏkkaji” (One large soy latte with a little bit of foam, two espresso shots, two cups, and cup holder). This mission created a number of humorous situations resulting from the TV show members’ lack of English proficiency (cf. J. S.-Y. Park, 2009a). Even though the program did not mention about why Think Coffee was selected (it is famous for fair trade coffee), since this episode was aired, Korean travel blogs have reported that they visited the café and tried ordering the same soy latte as the Infinite Challenge members did.

Along with the matchip, what proves the influence of Infinite Challenge on Korean tours in NYC more evidently is a place, Dumbo (Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass), Brooklyn. I could see that a number of Korean students who traveled around NYC commonly posted a picture taken at a certain point in Dumbo, Brooklyn. Later, I learned that the place was a scene in which the Infinite Challenge members took a photo that would be inserted in the show’s 2010 calendar. Again, after the episode was aired, this place has become a must-go location among NYC Korean tourists.

Furthermore, taking a photo in the same position and pose as the TV members did has become almost a ritual. Figure 6.2 shows the processes of mediatization and remediation (Thurlow & Jaworski, 2014). The left photo is one of Infinite Challenge members, and the right one is Sangwoo’s Facebook profile photo (during the time of writing this thesis). While the program introduced this place in relation to the poster of an American classic movie, Once upon a time in America, Korean young adults see it as the place where members of the Infinite Challenge took their calendar picture rather than simply one of the images representing NYC landscape. As Figure 6.2 shows, in Dumbo, Koreans take a picture between the red-brick building against the tower of the Manhattan Bridge. One
Korean travelogue adds that in the picture, the Empire State Building should be placed between the two columns of the bridge tower.

Figure 6.2 Mediatization and Remediation of Dumbo, Brooklyn

Korean young adults’ patterns of travel show that their trips are mediated not only by the post-colonial imagination of the West, but also by the consumption of the forms of Western cultures appropriated by South Korea’s popular culture and its people. Such interpretations of tourist places show that Korean students’ gaze on NYC reflects their localized cultural dispositions and desires, which supplant the post-colonial gaze which is directed at globally preformed iconic places within NYC. Especially, in imagining cultural encounters with NYC, they predominantly rely on their intra-ethnic social and cultural networks, including word of mouth from Korean classmates, Korean travelogues, and Korean mass-media. In this process, their cosmopolitan relationship at work is suspended, and the enjoyment of satisfying their intra-ethnic cultural expectations is pursued.

Furthermore, the expectations grounded in the Korean localized gaze make Korean students consider their planned and desired spectacular locations an element of intercultural difference. They believe that if they plan a trip to NYC with non-Korean
friends, several tourist sites of their choice should be discussed, negotiated, and undervalued—another potential moment for intercultural fatigue. This is another reason why Korean students prefer to have an intra-ethnic trip to NYC with their Korean friends who share their expectations and desires concerning spectacular locations. With co-ethnic friends, they believe that they can enjoy their trip in a more comfortable and entertaining way. Such Korean students’ ritual of tourism suggests that encounters with the cultural Other in study abroad programs are often intersected with conflicting discourses of cultural “immersion” (Doerr, 2013, 2015) and intra-ethnic “comfort zone” (Abelmann, 2009).

5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the contexts in which Korean English study abroad students’ desire for cosmopolitan lifestyle is fashioned and endorsed, and has specified the patterns of cultural consumption within their sites of travel. Although the dominant ideologies of English study abroad as educational investment and rational consumption frame one’s intercultural activities as venues for obtaining linguistic and cultural capital, Korean students find their own justification for cultural consumption when they feel the need for a suspended and self-caring moment from those dominant ideologies. For them, a series of travels are significant moments not only for enhancing intercultural awareness, but also for surviving their instrumentally motivated self-development project. By traveling to Algonquin Park and New York City, for example, Korean students physically and emotionally escape from their imperative to study and improve English.

Korean students’ practices of self-suspension and self-caring also reveal how national networks operate in transnational experiences. Their key technique for their enactment of enjoyment often relies not only on their navigation of where to go and what to see, but also on their choice of social network—with whom they go for a trip. Their choice of social networks often ends up with a strong affiliation to co-ethnic groups, which they view as a comfort zone. As previous chapters have shown, some Korean students strive to go beyond the comfort zone to achieve linguistic development and multicultural competence. However, most Korean students accept the necessity of a
comfort zone, where they can negotiate their instrumental mindset with a ludic, fun and relaxed lifestyle and can seek for their version of cosmopolitan experiences. In this sense, it is tenuous to argue that “self-segregation” and the pursuit of a comfort zone is the foremost barrier for language study abroad learners when it comes to immersing oneself in a host culture. Korean learners, indeed, keep their own pace in their project of educational investment by weighing up different linguistic, educational, and emotional options presented in front of them (cf. Abelmann, 2009; Kang, 2015).

In fact, Korean students’ cultural consumption and cosmopolitan desire do not remain within the practice of transnational tourism. In multicultural Toronto, they also encounter people of different ethnic backgrounds and eventually build relationships with them. In the next chapter, I will further examine how Korean students have cosmopolitan experiences through everyday cultural exchanges and relationships. It will support what this chapter uncovers in terms of Korean students’ cultural consumption—the pursuit of enjoyment and justification of a co-ethnic comfort zone.
CHAPTER SEVEN
EVERYDAY FUN IN MULTICULTURAL TORONTO: ENJOYING COSMOPOLITAN RELATIONSHIPS

1 Introduction

Before Korean students are about to return to South Korea, there are two farewell rituals that they like to perform with their friends and teachers whom they have fostered relationships with during their studies in Canada. One of the rituals is to ask people to write farewell messages on a Canadian flag. On their last days of studies at Lingua City, Korean youth bring large Canadian flags and black markers to their classes and ask their classmates and teachers to write some message to them on the flags. During lunchtime and breaks, they visit other classrooms and seek out more farewell messages. Their foreign friends jot down messages on the Canadian flags such as “I was glad to meet you here,” “I’ll miss you a lot,” and “Keep in touch.” Finally, Korean students take pictures with their foreign friends while displaying the flag in front of them.

This farewell ritual proceeds to another ritual, that is, the farewell party. Korean students organize their own farewell parties and invite their friends in person or via Facebook. The locations of parties are various, usually depending on the composition of the ethnicities of their friends. If they feel the need to accommodate the ethnic diversity of invitees, they prefer to book large Western bars. Conversely, when their friends are mostly from East Asian backgrounds, Japanese or Korean restaurants are more likely to be chosen. During the parties, as usual, all of them eat, drink, and talk boisterously. Returning Korean students promise that they will treat their foreign friends warmly and convivially if they get a chance to visit South Korea someday and that they will also contact their friends and visit their countries in the “near” future. In this manner, Korean and non-Korean students promise to keep in touch, thinking that it will be easy to do so because they are connected through Facebook.

These two farewell rituals symbolize Korean students’ cosmopolitan relationships or global friendships that they have built during their transnational life. With this in mind, this chapter will explore the ways in which Korean students establish global friendships and perform intercultural exchanges in their relationships. Global friendship building is
another important element of their cosmopolitan experience and enjoyment in overseas education.

In this chapter, I draw on the concept of *everyday multiculturalism* (Wise & Velayutham, 2009a) to make sense of Korean students’ global friendship building in their transnational education project. Wise and Velayutham (2009b) define everyday multiculturalism as “a grounded approach to looking at the everyday practice and lived experience of diversity in specific situations and spaces of encounter” (p. 3, italics in origin). Everydayness is a major feature that distinguishes Korean learners’ experiences of inter-ethnic mingling from those of intra-ethnic travel. As their travel is taken as a quintessential moment of self-suspension from everyday life, Korean students prefer to travel with their close Korean friends (Chapter 6). On the other hand, it is in their everyday life that they meet and hang out with classmates from other countries. Korean students eat, drink, talk, and sometimes fall in love with non-Korean friends within Toronto’s multicultural context.

While spending time with students of different cultural backgrounds, Korean young adults confront the cultural Other and have intercultural exchanges that they may not have experienced in South Korea. Through everyday practices of multiculturalism, Korean students not only acquire multiple but mundane repertoires of languages and cultures, but also reinterpret and mobilize their ethnic cultures. Especially, their position as youth leads them to form their everyday intercultural practices characterized as informal, transgressional, and vulgar (Bucholtz, 2002, 2011; Mendoza-Denton & Boum, 2015; Rampton, 2005; Willis, 1977; Wortham, 2011). However, such characteristics of intercultural exchanges also affect the ways in which Korean students make sense of their cosmopolitan relationship. For example, while enjoying the jocularity of relationship building, they think that the relationship is too light-hearted and too transient to be transformed into legitimate cultural and social capital in South Korea.

In the following sections, I will first examine how Korean students build a global friendship by analyzing the interactions of their lunchtime—a key *contact zone* (Clifford 1997; Pratt 1991), where the school’s official discourses are suspended, and friendship is actively formed. The analysis of lunchtime talks will reveal that intercultural exchanges that happen during lunchtime have multiple functions in students’ lives, both in and
beyond the school. The next section will examine the ways in which South Korean popular culture, youth subculture, and language serve as important resources for intercultural exchanges. The cultural practices transgressing official and conformist forms of culture contribute to cementing the intimacy of cosmopolitan relationships. However, the intercultural exchanges grounded in informality, jocularity and light-heartedness cause a couple of tensions within Korean students’ lives. The last section will explore these tensions. Specifically, it will explore how Korean students feel that global friendships cannot address their concerns that are deeply embedded in South Korean social and cultural contexts. Moreover, it will show that similar to the case of language insecurity (Chapter 3), they are concerned over how to transform their cosmopolitan relationship into legitimate global “experiences” in the South Korean job market.

2 Everyday fun in global friendship building

2.1 Communicative events in lunchtime talks

The image of mingling students from diverse cultural, ethnic and racial backgrounds is a representation typically observed in marketing documents of the English study abroad industry. For sure, cosmopolitan relationships are imagined and interpreted as one benefit of international education. The imagination assumes that the medium of communication among ethnically different students should be English (i.e., the ideology of English as a global language) and that the relationship should foster intercultural awareness, which is considered an important tenet of global citizenship. Because of the assumed importance of ethnic intermingling in studying English abroad, Lingua City endeavors to organize various social and educational events and open up spaces for global friendship building. For example, it designs and implements after-school activities for almost every school day, which are comprised of various paid and unpaid cultural events (e.g., neighborhood tour, CN tower tour, beer brewery tour, soccer game, etc.). Also, the school helps students to organize a social responsibility event (e.g., Dress for the Cause, Holiday Food Drive) and a national day (e.g., Colombian Day, Japanese Day, Korean Day). Teachers in the school also incorporate elements of intercultural competence in their curricula and teaching activities. Generally, Lingua City can be seen
as a multicultural space that guides students from diverse geographical areas to
intermingle and share their cultural heritages.

In spite of the school’s actions to create official environments and opportunities
favorable to multiculturalism, Korean students’ interests and participation in events
organized by the school are not high. Similar to the case of package tours (Chapter 6),
Korean learners feel a sense of artificiality and formality at such events and thus view
intercultural exchanges there as not fun. They tend to perceive the intercultural spaces in
school more as places for learning English than for playing. As a result, Korean students
tend to build their social networks more significantly through informal situations, routes
and cultural exchanges, governed by mundane and everydayness as sources of more
ludic and fun experiences.

At school, the key site that new students begin to meet their global friends is the
school’s lunch period. There are two practical reasons that lunchtime becomes an
important site for friendship building. First, as Lingua City daily schedule consists of one
morning class (“core” course) and two afternoon classes (“optional” courses) (See
Introduction and Chapter 5), students tend to stay and have lunch in their morning
classroom before moving to another classroom for their first afternoon class. Naturally,
new students who take the same morning course become close to each other and have
lunch together. Students usually bring their own lunch which are prepared by themselves
or their homestay family. Second, Korean students during their early stage of studying
abroad tend to go back to their homestay early in the evening. This is not only because
they feel the pressure that they should study English rather than play, but also because
they want to save money by having dinner at their homestay (Chapter 2). Dinner is
included in their homestay fee, and eating out can cost more than $10, an additional
spending onto their cost of living. As such, even if new Korean students attend after-
school activities, they are reluctant to go out for dinner or out to the pub, which can lead
to other opportunities for inter-ethnic mingling.

Along with these practical reasons, an important aspect to consider is that
lunchtime is a sort of third space (Kramsch, 1993) where constraints on normative
English use are temporarily suspended. Lunchtime is different from classroom situations
where the consensus on learning and using “good” or “standard” English operates both on
teachers and students. Although “student monitors” patrol the school space to promote the official language policy of English-only during lunchtime, it is common for students to transgress the policy. Thus, for one hour at lunchtime, multiple communicative events with multiple linguistic repertoires happen and eventually play a major role in friendship building.

First of all, the communicative events during lunchtime are concerned with foods—talking about food and sharing food. As Pennycook and Otsuji (2015) suggest, food is a powerful mediating object for everyday relation building and is an important part of everyday life. The practices of eating and sharing foods—commensality—offer students a springboard for intercultural and interpersonal exchanges. Thus, it is quite common that students who are new to each other begin their conversation with the topic of what they are eating for lunch. Of course, lunchtime in the first week of each session is quite calm and quiet. Afterward, as students find their lunch buddies, lunchtime talk eventually gets noisy, restless, boisterous, and clamorous, similar to talks in markets (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015). Multiple communicative events and functions occur simultaneously, the boundary between communicative events is unclear and momentary, and the transition to another function is rapid and frequent (cf. Egbert, 1997).

Nonetheless, there are several major communicative acts working to build and foster friendship. The first act, as mentioned above, is concerned with food; students introduce, taste and even share their lunches with others. Excerpt 7.1 is typical of the communicative act in lunchtime, in which Heejun and Dongil taste the lasagne that I bring for lunch and discuss its taste:

Excerpt 7.1: Lunchtime talk 1—Talking about food
Participants: H (Heejun), D (Dongil)

(Erika and Insung are chatting separately.)
1 H: Honestly, this is the most delicious lasagna.
2 D: Where is my lasagna? (0.5) So delicious.

When Heejun and Dongil are talking about my lasagne (this is not Dongil’s!), Erika and Insung are having a conversation about another topic: arranging a house party plan (Excerpt 7.2). As Heejun and Dongil stop talking to eat the lasagne, Erika and
Insung’s conversation comes to the fore. This illustrates a situation in which different conversations overlap at one moment, which can happen as students talk about different topics with different interlocutors. Excerpt 7.2 is another communicative event that typically and commonly occurs at lunchtime:

Excerpt 7.2: Lunchtime talk 2—Talking about an after-school activity
Participants: E (Erika), I (Insung), D (Dongil)

1  E: Now, you need to pay me $10. Okay?
2  I: (2.0) Okay, okay. ((laugh)) Get it.
3  D: Mathematics
4  E: After school=
5  I: =After school=
6  E: =you, guys, are in front of the main building, [ and then go to LCBO], and after, go to the house. And why don’t you wait until 7?
7  I: [ In front of the main building?]
8  I: Yes, I know, yeah. I think so.
9  E: Ok?

In this excerpt, Erika and Insung are talking about the house party that Erika and Murilo, another Brazilian male student, will host. Erika proposes that Insung and Dongil meet in front of the school building and then move to a nearby liquor store (LCBO). For the purchase of liquor, she asks them to give her a certain amount of money in advance. This example shows that lunchtime is not only space for eating food, but also for planning social events and building relationships. During lunch, students share their everyday routines and gain understandings of their global friends’ routines, hobbies, and even characters. When they find that they are like-minded persons, their relationship goes beyond the classroom by talking about and planning leisure activities with each other after school, such as going for a movie or dinner and hosting a house party as in the above case. As they spend more time with each other even after school, their relationships get more intimate, and some of the male and female students even develop romantic relationships.
2.2. Heightening jocularity in lunchtime talks

Students’ communication at lunchtime does not always remain informative. It is also relational and performative, as they intentionally employ communicative functions such as teasing and language play. In addition, while speaking in English, they often face a vocabulary and expression gap in their talk. As they search for an English word or a phrase that they want to express, the communicative event also shifts to a pedagogical setting. However, the act of searching for an English word is not straightforward at all; irrelevant topics interrupt the communicative event, and finally code-switching to their first languages takes place in solving the communicative gap. Such a simultaneous, hybrid, multi-natured aspect of lunchtime communication can be seen in the following example:

Excerpt 7.3: Lunchtime talk 3—Search for English words
Participants: C (In Chull, me), D (Dongil), I (Insung), J (Jungmin), H (Heejun), E (Erika)
Languages: English and Korean (italic: Romanised, character: translation)

1  C: Where is my lasagna?
2  D: Stomach ((laugh))
3  I: Can I?
4  J: No, no. I can't.
5  I: Why?
6  J: Never.
7  D: Do you have rice?
8  I: Can I?
9  J: No, no, no. Very disgusting.
10 H: ((looking at the lunchbox with the lasagna)) Where is it? Intestine?
11 J: chang (장: intestine)
12 H: Intestine? lub? lub?
13 I: What? What do you mean?
14 J: Ah! Guts!
15 H: Gut is this part?
16 D: ((pointing at lower abdomen)) This one? ((pointing at upper abdomen)) This one and this one?
17 H: ((pointing at lower abdomen)) Yeah, this one.
18 I: Organ. Just organ. ((laugh))
19 J: Yeah, organ, long organ. It's like kopch'ang (곱창: intestine with a vulgar meaning, or chitterlings.) It looks like, kopch'angi anira
In line 1 and 2, I am looking for my lasagna while Korean students are taking turns tasting it. Dongil replies that it is already in his stomach because he ate it a lot. However, my lasagna is actually in Jungmin’s hands, so Insung is asking Jungmin to share the lasagna (line 3). In line 4-9, Jungmin is teasing Insung by refusing his request intentionally. Especially, Jungmin keeps making fun of Insung, commenting that the lasagna tastes “disgusting” (As mentioned in Excerpt 7.1, my lasagna tastes good, however). More hilarious is that in spite of the topical focus on my lasagna in the discussion, Dongil interrupts and looks for rice from another friend’s lunch (line 7).

In line 10, Heejun, who sees the lasagna lunchbox almost empty, is asking Jungmin where the lasagna is, and is confirming that Jungmin ate a lot by saying that it is in his “intestine.” This turn of Heejun serves as a boundary leading the following talk to a pedagogical communicative event. Following Heejun’s turn, Jungmin spits out the Korean counterpart to the word “intestine,” chang. Jungmin’s response may be interpreted as having two intentions. First, he may be looking to “teach” other students what intestine means, assuming that other students would not know the “difficult” or “less frequently used” word. Second, Jungmin may be responding to Heejun’s question, “where is the lasagna?” but not to the word, “intestine,” assuming that he did not know the English word and thus just said the Korean word. Whatever Jungmin’s intentions are, in line 12, Heejun repeats the word with rising intonation, which suggests that he takes up Jungmin’s response as attributable to his wrong pronunciation or use of the word. Thus, he tries to find another synonym for chang. While Heejun is murmuring, Jungmin comes up with another word for chang, guts (line 14). However, their efforts to find an English word get messed up a bit; Heejun is trying to identify whether guts refer to the same part

\[ kopc’angi kopc’ang iguna. \text{ (곱창이 아니라 곱창이} \]

\[ \text{곱창이구나: It’s not what looks like intestine, but it is intestine.)} \]

20 I: Sibijjiang \text{ (십이지장: duodenum)}
21 J: Sibijjiang \text{ is at the end of.}
22 D: Ok. I’m gonna search
23 I: Taejang \text{ (대장: intestine)}
24 H: Intestine.
25 J: Master, General.
26 E: Ok, thank you guys. Bye.

((all laugh))
of intestine (line 15 and 17), and Dongil is asking exactly what part of the abdomen guts are (line 16). Confused, Insung simply glosses over all the parts in the abdomen as “organs” (line 18), but Jungmin continues to find a correct word by saying that the intestine is a “long organ” (line 19). Finally, Jungmin uses a Korean word again, *kopch’ang* (the small intestine, usually used for animals), which leads Insung to come up with another Korean word, *sibijijang* (duodenum), and Dongil declares that he will search English translations for all of the Korean words, using his mobile phone (line 22).

As their communicative event for searching for English words is not completed and getting more chaotic, the pedagogically oriented talk shifts to a language play. When Insung says another Korean word, *taejang* (the large intestine) (line 23), Heejun makes sure that it is “intestine” (line 24), but Jungmin takes it as an object of language play and says that *taejang* is a “master” or “general,” its Korean homonym, *taejang*. Although all of the Korean students can understand the language play, Erika has lost the flow of the conversation, as several Korean words are involved. Thus, she says that she wants to leave, and her response to the exclusive talk among the Korean male students makes them burst into laughter.

As the above examples show, students perform a variety of communicative functions while eating together. Through eating and talking convivially, they share their life, learn some English words, and build up friendships. More importantly, in the informal space of lunchtime language use, their talk is conducted in a less formal or constrained manner. This informality during lunchtime talk produces an atmosphere that is more fun, ludic and jocular, thus leading to positive effects in the process of global friendship building.

Especially, the vulgar use of language in informal communicative settings leads to a heightened jocular environment, which can be viewed as a token of intimacy among international youth. For instance, the jocularity of the lunchtime talks culminates when participants begin to tease one of the students for fun. Importantly, the communicative function of this kind is particularly related to the coarse uses of language such as swear words, critical comments on appearance, and slang. Furthermore, as Rampton (2005) argues, the linguistic repertoires exploited for this function are often languages of other ethnic groups rather than a learner’s first language—that is, *language crossing*. The
following example, taken from the same lunchtime interaction used above, demonstrates how language crossing functions in lunchtime talk. In this excerpt, the Korean male students draw on Japanese swear words to tease Erika:

Excerpt 7.4: Lunchtime talk 4—Language crossing
Participants: E (Erika), I (Insung), D (Dongil), J (Jungmin)
Languages: English, Korean (italic: Romanized, character: translation) and Japanese (italic and underlined: Romanized, character: translation)

1  E: And the next class will be debate. The second class, today.
2  I: Today? [Second class?]  
3  E: [No, another class.]  
4  D: Debate?  
5  I: Ah, please win.  
6  E: I cannot, duh, duh, duh, scream.  
7  J: Discream?  
8  E: Yell ([yall])  
9  All (Except E): Yell ([yell])  
10 D: Ah, yes  
11 J: ((loud)) ya ([ya], apistrophe: hey)!  
12 D: ((louder)) ya ([ya], apistrophe: hey)!  
13 I: ((in high pitch)) ya ([yaaa], apistrophe: hey)! Sorry.  
14 D: You should do that. ((loud)) ya (apistrophe: hey), shut up!  
15 E: So bad  
16 J: Damare (だまれ: shut up)  
17 I: Damare, Damare, Damare, kas. (だまれ.だまれ.だまれ., カス.: shut up, shut up, shut up, hey bullshit)  
18 J: Say everything.  
19 I: Damare, kas  
20 E: Damare, kas? What’s that?  
21 I: To Japanese, shut up, garbage.  
22 D: Damare, kas.  
23 I: Shut up, garbage.  
24 E: What?  
25 I: Shut up!  
26 E: Shut up.  
27 I: Garbage.  
28 J: (loud) Shut up!  
29 D: Such a garbage.  
30 I: Trash  
31 J: Waste  
32 D: Shut up such a garbage.  
33 E: Really?  
34 I: Yeah
In this excerpt, Erika initiates the conversation by confirming with her lunchtime friends that her debate class is after lunch. Next, Insung begins to tease her by giving her inappropriate advice on the mock debate activity, that is, “please win” (line 5). Erika intends to express that the debate is not about winning or losing but for exchanging ideas. However, she cannot find an English word for such forceful behavior in a debate (line 6). What she ends up saying is “yell,” which is pronounced as [yall] (line 8). All of the Korean male students pick up the word (line 9) and begin to tease Erika’s effort by playing with the word she chose. They take turns mocking and screaming her [ya] sound, which is also a Korean interjection, ya (line 11-14). In Korean, this interjection is a plain and impolite form that is used among peers or when someone older admonishes someone younger.

Dongil jokingly tells her that she should yell the words “shut up” to win the debate (line 14), and she responds by saying that it is “so bad” (line 15). In spite of her disagreement, the Korean students continue to enjoy this situation by bringing up the Japanese expression of “shut up.” To the Korean students, this expression is funny because the sound of damare is similar to that of the Korean expression, tamarhae [tamalhe], which means “say everything” (line 18). This Korean expression constitutes a jocular opposition to the meaning of “shut up” in Japanese. Furthermore, the Korean students intensify the meaning of this Japanese expression by adding the Japanese swear word, kas (garbage), to it. As Erika cannot get the meaning of the expression, damare, kas (line 20), the Korean students explain the meaning by parsing the sentence out (line 21-35).

This interaction, thus, shows that Korean students begin to make fun of her in English but elevate the intensity of fun through crossing their language codes to Korean (“ya”) and Japanese (“Damare, kas”). Especially, the use of the coarse Japanese expression plays a pivotal role in teasing Erika and making the interactional moment more jocular. In this talk, the use of coarse languages of an ethnic out-group is exploited as a linguistic resource to continue their interactions, rather than make the “multilingual” speakers lose face by the referential meaning of the swear words. Their “vulgar”
performances targeted at Erika are based on their assumption that they have a good relationship with her and that she would not misunderstand their intention. Therefore, the Korean male students believe that their teasing performance manifests the degree of intimacy between them and her.

The investigation of lunchtime talks and situations so far implies that the talks have multiple functions involving foods, social activity plans, English learning, and playful language use. The communicative functions suggest some of the stages of global friendship building that Korean students can go through. When they are new students, they begin building relationships with students from other countries by having lunch together (Excerpt 7.1). Then, as the relationship develops, they start to do other things together in and out of the school context, such as taking the same courses, going to a restaurant or a pub, having a party, or going on a tour or to a local festival (Excerpt 7.2). As they enjoy their global friendship through the activities they do together, the cemented relationship gives rise to informal, jocular, mundane, and fun intercultural exchanges in their everyday contact zone (Excerpt 7.3 and 7.4).

3 K-pop, K-food, and K-f*words: Mobilizing Korean culture and language in cosmopolitan relationships

3.1 Teaching Korean popular culture

Intercultural exchange is often imagined as the exchange of codified and official versions of national and ethnic cultures. The objects of cultural exchange involve national symbols and heritages, or representations of banal nationalism (Billig, 1995). In the English study abroad market, images of traditional South Korean culture are widely circulated as resources for intercultural communication. For example, in pre-departure sessions, Korean students are informed that most of the intercultural communication they will experience while overseas will be concerned not only with “you,” but also with “your country”—South Korea. Thus, in order to help students to prepare for this situation, guidebooks advise Koreans to be familiar with South Korean culture and history in order to participate in successful intercultural exchanges. To add to this advice, Korean students are also recommended to bring to their host country cultural artifacts
symbolizing Korean culture (e.g., T-shirt printed with Korean letters) or Korean cultural souvenirs (e.g., key chains, traditional dolls, etc.) as gifts for their future non-Korean friends.

After their arrival at Toronto, students further encounter Korean culture that is formed and maintained by Korean immigrant communities, although the styles and forms of culture heritage look out-dated. In the two Korea Towns in Toronto, Korean students see their national symbols displayed on the signboards of Korean restaurants and stores. They also consume Korean foods such as Kimchi, Bulgogi (grilled marinated beef), Bibimbap (mixed rice), and Gamjatang (port spine soup), although they evaluate the tastes as less authentic. Because of the cultural representations and commodities on display in Toronto’s Korea Towns, it seems to Korean students that these communities can be useful resources for intercultural exchanges with non-Koreans. Indeed, when Korean students foster friendships with their classmates from other countries, Korean ethnic communities and commodities in Toronto function as important cultural resources (cf. Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015). For instance, when students of other ethnic backgrounds show interests and knowledge in Korean foods—food is involved again—, Korean students have a “culinary journey” (Duruz, 2009) to Korean restaurants or supermarkets with their new friends and introduce “authentic” Korean foods to them.

Interestingly, Korean students soon learn that non-Koreans’ interest and knowledge of Korean cultures, especially, Korean foods, are grounded in their exposure, interests, or passion to Korean popular culture. Korean students at school quickly discover that not only East Asian students but also Latin American students are quite knowledgeable about Korean popular cultures, especially Korean idol groups. In other words, non-Korean students’ interests in Korean culture are not simply motivated by intercultural curiosity, but are also based on their contact with Korean popular culture prior to their overseas studies.

The global interest in Korean popular culture has been facilitated by the Korean Wave (Y. Kim, 2013; Kuwahara, 2014), a cultural phenomenon leading to the popularity of Korean idol groups and dramas over all regions of the world. Through their classmates, Korean students actually identify the effects of the Korean Wave on foreigners’ ideas of Korean people and culture, which, in turn, reshape their identities and
relationships (J.-S. Park, 2013; Shin, 2010). When they find that their global friends are interested in Korean popular culture, Korean students are more likely to be confident, initiative, and proactive in introducing and expanding on Korean culture to their friends. They take the initiative to tell their global friends about recent trends regarding Korean idol groups, showcase other Korean songs and dances, and bring their friends to Korean restaurants and noraebang (Korean karaoke) located in the two Korea Towns in Toronto.

Through this process, Korean students recognize that the Korean Wave can contribute to building and maintaining global friendships with a group of students who they perceive as ethnically and culturally distant, especially with Latin American students. Korean students want to build a more intimate relationship with Latin American students, as the former perceives the latter linguistically as “better” English speakers and culturally as more Western (Chapter 4). Nonetheless, cultural differences between the two ethnic groups often make it difficult for Korean students to approach them and continue the relationship. Korean students attribute this estranged relationship to the lack of shared topics of conversation (kongt’ ongūi chuje). As Dongil said: “In class, a topic of conversation is given, but outside of class, it is not. It’s really uncomfortable to talk with Latin American students. To overcome the cultural barriers, there should be kongt’ ongūi chuje” (Interview, October 2013). In such circumstances, Korean popular culture can function as a shared topic. When Latin American students show interests in Korean popular culture, Korean students feel that the relational barriers caused by cultural differences are lowered.

To illustrate, Insung and Dongil saw Murilo (a student from Brazil) as a typical Latin American student at Lingua City. Insung and Dongil believed that Murilo was the most proficient English speaker in their social network, stating that his English accent sounded nearly native. In turn, Murilo was a big fan of Korean girl groups. Because of his interest in Korean pop-culture, Murilo actively engaged in making friendships with Korean students at school and joined different social events in Toronto with Insung, Dongil and other Korean students. For instance, in late June 2013, he went to the Toronto Pride Parade with Dongil, Insung, Jungmin, and Dongseok. After this event, he invited the Korean male students to another event where they were able to watch a soccer game with his Brazilian friends in which Brazil was playing against Spain (2013 FIFA
Confederations Cup Final). The Korean male students were excited to watch the game with Brazilians, who they thought came from “the nation of soccer.”

In addition to this event, Murilo frequently organized house parties, invited his friends, including Korean students, and cooked or asked them to cook their ethnic foods. During house parties, one of the routines was playing music or watching music videos on YouTube. The following episode from one of these parties shows how Korean pop-music foregrounds cultural exchanges in a multiethnic event:

Excerpt 7.5: Field note on a house party (July 2013)
When I got at Murilo’s place, Dongil, Insung, Murilo, Erika, Masami and Murilo’s Brazilian friend, Jose, were there. While Murilo and Erika were preparing dinner, all were watching Korean music videos on YouTube, which were being played on a TV connected to Murilo’s laptop. Although the party was to introduce Brazilian food to the East Asian students, the topic of conversation was mostly concerned with Korean popular music. Murilo and Jose seemed to know all about Korean girl groups. Murilo’s favorite group was Sistar 19, so he played the group’s music video, “itta ŏpsŭnikkan (Gone not around any longer).” Then, Dongil and Insung played their favorite girl groups’ music video and all of the male students talked about the different group members’ appearances and dances, and sometimes imitated the main parts of their dances.

This episode demonstrates how transcultural flow takes place through the mediation of popular music. Murilo showcases his tastes in Korean music, which is connected to feminine sexuality, as evidenced in his taste in female idol groups such as Sistar 19. Then, Dongil and Insung enrich Murilo’s repertoire by recommending less known but similarly sexually charged girl groups and songs. In these exchanges, both ethnic groups enjoy talking about the sexuality of Korean girl groups (Epstein & Turnbull, 2014; E.-Y. Jung, 2013; Oh, 2014) and “staging” the choreographed dances of these groups (Jaffe, 2015). This shared topic between the Brazilian and Korean students helps to maintain conversations and enhance the lighthearted, mundane, fun, and seemingly sexist atmospheres among male students.
3.2 Teaching Korean youth subculture: Drinking and swearing

When Korean students meet and hang out with international students, they do not simply reproduce Korean popular culture, but also diffuse informal Korean youth culture to their global friends. The most noticeable Korean subculture that most Korean students bring to friendship building is concerned with drinking. For sure, liquor is an important part of overseas students’ life just as much as food (cf. Manning, 2012). Eating food and drinking liquor always go hand in hand in their social events such as clubbing, pubbing, dining, and having house parties. Because drinking in a pub is not a monetarily reasonable option and because they cannot drink as much as they want there, it is preferable to buy liquor and drink at a friend’s place—this is their version of a house party.

As mentioned above, Erika and Murilo frequently invited school friends to their place near the Eglinton West subway station. Even though foods at parties were ethnically different each time (Brazilian, Korean, Japanese, and Italian), interestingly, Insung and Dongil dominated the drinking culture at the house parties. Especially, they staged two drinking activities: wŏnsat (one shot: bottom-up) and p’okt’anju (a Korean version of boilermaker). During the same party that was introduced in Excerpt 7.5, five students, including Dongil and Insung, played a board game after having a Brazilian dinner prepared by Murilo and Erika and watching a series of Korean girl group music videos. They agreed that the last loser of the board game they were playing would drink a glass of beer in “one shot.” The following was my observations:

Excerpt 7.6: Field note on a house party (July 2013)
When the first round was over, Murilo began to repeat a Korean word, “masŏra” (drink bottom-up). Insung and Dongil looked at Murilo and asked him, “do you know this song?” Then, they began to sing a song with funny bodily movements: “masŏra, masŏra...suri tūrŏganda, tchuktchuktchuk...ŏnjekkaji ŏkke ch’umul ch’ugehalkkŏya?…”43 But it turned out their versions of the song and rhythmic movements were different, and they concluded that each university must have a different version. Then, Dongil and Insung taught the song and movements to Murilo, Erika, Masami, and me.

43 This song may be translated: “Bottom-up, bottom-up…alcohol is coming in…how long will you make us do this shoulder dance?...”
The fact that Murilo repeats “masōra” in this episode indicates that he already knows a part of Korean drinking culture—1) exhorting a friend, particularly, a junior, to drink, and 2) drinking in one attempt when requested by another person. This ritual of drinking reflects sŏnhubae munhwasa (seniority culture), which informally but powerfully works in not only business but also college relationships (Nah & Kwon, 2010). Moreover, the drinking song and rhythmic movements accompanying drinking are part of today’s Korean youth culture, even though Dongil and Insung have variations in specific lyrics and movements. The culture-specific way of drinking, that is, shooting back while singing a ludic song, is transculturally diffused in this setting, as the two Korean students perform and teach them for their global friends.

One week after the above-mentioned house party, Murilo organized another house party with a Korean food theme. Insung and Dongil prepared ingredients for kimch’i tchigae (Kimchi stew) and bulgogi, and also bought soju, as well as beer. At the party, the Korean college students performed another Korean-style drinking activity—p’ŏkt’anju. Although Murilo and Erika already knew and tasted somaek, a type of p’ŏkt’anju, where soju and beer are mixed, Dongil and Insung showcased ways of making somaek. First, they asked Murilo for a pitcher and poured two cans of Molson-Canadian beer into it. Then, Dongil lifted and twisted a bottle of soju to make a vortex inside the bottle. He opened it, tapped the neck of the bottle to tip away a little soju, and then poured it into the pitcher. The other way of mixing this drink that they showcased was to pour beer and soju in a glass, cover the glass with a tissue, and then spin the glass around enough to create a water vortex inside. Then, they took the tissue off the glass and threw it at the wall. Since the tissue was soaked, it stuck to the wall. This was the climax of this fun activity.

The intercultural exchange of “teaching” and “learning” youth subculture also involves linguistic practice. As seen in lunchtime talks, English study abroad students are exposed to languages of other ethnic groups and employ them as resources of relationship building. In the first place, language study abroad students begin their language crossing by speaking greetings in their ethnic friends’ languages such as “annyǒng” in Korean and “Tudo bem?” in Portuguese (the equivalents of “hello” or “how are you” in English).
Afterward, as they spend more time in inter-ethnic friendships, students expand their repertories for language crossing with the larger part of the expressions concerned with teasing and cursing. This is because the use of out-group languages for such functions is perceived and performed in fun and jocular ways.

“Teaching and learning” profane languages takes the main stage, as speaking swear words or playing with them generates an intense degree of jocularity. Usually, mingling with other ethnic students frequently creates situations where students hear some curse or swear words from the languages of other ethnic students. Furthermore, the teaching and learning moment for language crossing is not only another source of intercultural enjoyment, but also strengthens peer affiliation. For instance, Geonyoung illustrated how she taught a Korean cursing expression, “chonna ttungttungae” (fuckin’ fat), to Latin American friends:

Excerpt 7.7: Interview with Geonyoung (July 2013)
Geonyoung: I’m completely regarded as an international pig (kukche twaeji). International pig! Foreign guys say it to me. In fact, Naesang (Geonyoung’s close Korean male friend) taught Brazilian guys “chonna ttungttungae,” and then whenever they see me, they tell me, “chonna ttungttungae.” ((In laughing tone)) I taught them that ttungttungae and t’ongt’ongae have different meanings.
In Chull: How did you explain the difference in meaning?
Geonyoung: I said, t’ongt’ongae is “chubby chubby,” and ttungttungae is “very very fat.” And chonna is “extremely.” It’s so funny. I also kept teaching the pronunciations, ttungttungae and t’ongt’ongae, so Brazilian guys can say both of them.
In Chull: Aha, they can.
Geonyoung: ((mocking Brazilian accents of Korean)) “Chonna ttungttungae,” “chonna ippō” (fuckin’ pretty), and “chonna mot saenggyŏsŏ” (fuckin’ ugly). They can say all of them.

Above all, Geonyoung’s laughing tone in this part of interview implies that she takes the situation of teaching as a “fun,” ludic and jocular moment. She initiates this topic by highlighting that she was teased by other ethnic students; her appearance was an object of their “rude” behavior. However, she does not take the critical comment on her appearance as a personal insult, since Brazilian male students make their comments in Korean, which were taught to them by another male Korean student. Rather than
retaliating against the Brazilian students, Geonyoung taught them another adjective to
describe one’s body shape, *t’ongt’ongae*, meaning obese but cute. She also taught them
the usage of the vulgar intensifier, *chonna*, and in turn, the Brazilian students applied it to
other expressions for appearance.

Following this excerpt, Geonyoung clarified the mechanism of learning rude and
vulgar expressions of another language during intercultural communication settings:

Excerpt 7.8: Interview with Geonyoung (July 2013)
Geonyoung: I also taught a Brazilian guy both “*chugullae?*” (do you want
me to kill you?) and “*twejillae?*” (a more vulgar version of “do you want me
to kill you?”). After the Brazilian friend heard that “*twejillae?*” was a more
vulgar version, that guy only uses it. (Mocking Brazilian accents of
Korean) “*Chonna twejillae?*” He always says like this, so I say, “no, no,
you don’t have to say like that.” (laugh) It’s really hilarious. And cute.
When I see foreigners saying Korean swearing words, they look really cute.
But they feel the same. I always say, “*calata, cabrao do caralho!*” (a
Portuguese swear word meaning “Shut the fuck you up, bastard”). And they
say, “don’t do that,” but I keep saying it. When they say, “Hello, Audrey
(Geonyoung’s English name),” I smile and say it, and then they pretend to
be freaked out. It’s funny. They tell me that they also know Korean bad
words, and say, “*ssibal, ssibal*” (fuckin’)

Geonyoung’s account of how a Brazilian peer prefers to use “*twejillae?*” as
opposed to “*chugullae?*” shows that international students like to select more vulgar
options in learning “bad” expressions. In spite of the increase in the offensive nature of
these words, Geonyoung states that it is “hilarious” to see non-Korean students using
swear words and that non-Koreans even look “cute” when saying them. Interestingly,
Geonyoung makes a point to ensure that in their friendship the language crossing of
swear words is bidirectional. She has also learned Brazilian swear words and
intentionally used them in front of her Brazilian counterparts for fun. Her Brazilian
friends who are greeted with her cursing expressions respond to her by using the Korean
swear word, *ssibal*.

Korean students’ experience of linguistic exchanges reveals that these exchanges
often occur in the forms and functions of playful language crossing. It involves critical
comments on appearance within intersexual interactions, and informal and vulgar forms
of interjections or intensifiers. As Rampton’s (2005) study shows, when these are
performed as *safe crossing* in multilingual youth play, language crossing can take on an important role in affirming peer allegiance. Furthermore, Rampton (2005) argues that this form of language crossing indicates the liminality in peer interactions, as these types of crossings are “continuously generated in the times and places apart from work and assigned to leisure activities” (p. 194). At lunchtime and breaks, where one is not required to use a standard or normative form of English as in the class at school, Korean students’ obsession over “good” English is lowered, and their multiple linguistic repertoires (English, Korean, Japanese, Spanish, and Portuguese) are mobilized for jocular purposes. It is such mundane and everyday translingual practices that Korean students usually undertake in building multicultural relationships.

4 Ambivalence in cosmopolitan relationships

4.1 “Deep” talk: A national register

In late October of 2013, I was invited by Minsik to meet Korean male students for a small drink (*kandanhage hanjan hanǔn chari*), which turned out to be a farewell drink for Jeongho. Jeongho, Minsik, and Hyunbin met earlier and had been playing billiards in *tangguyjang* (a billiards room) located at Yonge and Finch, an intersection within one of the Korean Towns in Toronto. In the billiards room, Korean instant noodles and snacks were displayed, which gave the place a real authentic Korean atmosphere to me. This authentic atmosphere grew as I noticed that there was a *keimbang* (a computer game room, a popular part of Korean youth leisure culture) adjoined to the billiards room.

After Junghyuk, Donghyun, and I arrived at the billiards room, we all moved to a Korean restaurant in the building next door for dinner and then to another Korean restaurant a couple of blocks away for drinks. At our final destination, they ordered a combo menu of soju and *makkŏlli* (Korean rice wine) to drink and *hoemuch’im* (spicy raw fish salad) and *t’angsuyuk* (sweet and sour pork) for *anju* (foods for eating while drinking). *Odengt’ang* (fish ball stew), *mandu* (dumpling), and *kyerant’ang* (egg stew) were offered for free. The intended meeting was not for light drink at all. They, including me, drank 8 bottles of soju and 4 bottles of *makkŏlli*, which is no modest amount. The event was over after midnight when the last subway train had already left the Finch
station. Junghyuk, Donghyun and I had to head back home on a night transit bus while the remaining students, Jeongho, Minsik and Hyunbin, headed for a noraebang (a Korean karaoke).

In this gathering, the participants’ behaviors, patterns, and expectations regarding recreation, foods and drinks, were precisely aligned with Korean tastes and dispositions. Tangguyang, sulchip (bars), and noraebang are common cultural places for leisure among Korean youth, especially college students who like to go to sulchip which offer a variety of free small food items (sōbisū anju) and alcohol at a reasonable price. For most, soju, which is the cheapest liquor in Korean, is their natural choice. Although Korean students in Toronto should spend an amount of money enjoying these ways (for example, Korean informants often complained about the price of soju in Toronto, which is almost ten times more expensive), as often as not, they hang out with their close Korean friends in two Korea Towns in Toronto to eat Korean authentic foods, drink Korean liquors, and do Korean-style recreational activities.

In fact, this pattern of cultural consumption reinforces one of the circulating stereotypes of Korean students in the school, which is that Korean students prefer to hang out only with other Koreans—a discourse of self-segregation (Abelmann, 2009, cf. Chapters 4 and 6). Similar to immigrants or other temporary overseas residents who are engaged more within a “national bubble” than in “mainstream” society (Abelmann, 2009; S. Jung, 2013; Yoon, 2014a), Korean overseas students tend to construct more intensive attachments to members of their intra-ethnic groups. In other words, although they have overlapping circles of friendship comprised of Korean and international peers, they show more intensive intimacy to the first group.

Above all, Korean students think that this intra-ethnic intimacy stems from the fact that they share the same language of communication—the Korean language. Korean students metaphorically register (Agha, 2007) the communication with Koreans as “deep” (kipūn) and “sincere” (chinsorhan) talk. For instance, Jungmin describes his farewell party in which he invited his Korean friends only:

Excerpt 7.9: Conversation with Jungmin (October 2013)
Jungmin: I like this atmosphere. Only Koreans meet, drink and talk. This is much better than just eating and yapping. I went to a Korean friend’s
farewell party yesterday. A lot of foreigners came, but it was so boisterous and the atmosphere was totally messed up. I would like to meet with maître manmūn aedāl (like-minded friends) and have a sincere (chinsorhan) talk. This is better. I can’t have a deep (kipūn) talk with guys of other countries.

Jungmin’s justification of this Korean-only event shows a clear opposition of registers between communications in English with foreigners and communications in Korean with Koreans. Jungmin prefers a Korean-only event to an inter-ethnic gathering since he can meet, drink and talk with his Korean friends in “sincere” and “deep” ways. In contrast, he describes the later type of event as “boisterous,” thus suggesting that the sole purpose of the gathering is to have fun and that the relationship with global friends is merely causal and insincere. He clarifies that like-minded friends with whom he can have a “deep” talk are not foreign friends—they are Koreans.

In fact, the communicative elements of “sincere” and “deep” talks (e.g., topics) are not referentially clear. Rather, the communicative register is more culturally and emotionally laden. My observations on informants’ talks with other Koreans during lunchtime and other social events show that most of their conversations are concerned with their experiences and relations grounded in their home and Korean habitus; for example, talking about girlfriends or boyfriends waiting in Korea for their return and parents supporting their studies abroad, or sharing uncertainties about their future in terms of employment. At the same time, using the Korean language, Korean students sense that they are allowed to express their emotions and intentions more freely, which is not the case when they are speaking in English. They perceive sharing their concerns in Korean as an important strategy for dealing with their emotional insecurity relating to their life in Toronto and at home. As Geonyoung said during one of our conversations: “it is fun to hang out with foreign friends, but really, I can’t have a kipūn (deep) talk. I can deliver it (my intention), but there is han’gye (a limitation), and chǒngsŏ (sentiments) are different. So I make Korean friends here and like to talk with them” (Interview, July 2013). While opposing “fun” and “deep” talks here, Geonyoung assumed that the latter form of communications could only be done primarily with her Korean friends. As she described, she felt unable to express herself fully because there was a “limitation” in communicating her Korean sentiments or cultural habitus to her foreign friends.
Importantly, Geonyoung’s choice of the word “han’gye” (limitation) also suggests that she may correlate the difficulty she perceives while having “deep” conversations with non-Koreans to her limited English proficiency. The association of English proficiency to the difficulty in having “deep” conversations is more evidently shown in Jiyoung’s account captured during a group interview with Korean students who were taking a Cambridge English program (Chapter 5):

Excerpt 7.10: Group interview 1 (November 2013)
Jiyoung: I hung out only with foreign friends for the first couple of months. After two months, I hated hanging out with foreign friends. I couldn’t communicate well with them. In the situation that both of us were not proficient in English, I couldn’t deliver everything that I wanted to express. There was a wall even if I wanted to be intimate. Thus, I began to hang out with Koreans. Now, I like it more.

Even though Jiyoung tried to make intimate friendships with foreign classmates, she discovered that their limited proficiency in English was a barrier against the progress of such relationships. Naturally, she turned to Korean friends within the school and now became satisfied with her social network.

During Jiyoung’s account, the word “wall,” which figuratively describes a barrier against going deeper, reveals that the walls within communication lead to walled relationships. In other words, she assumes that people with different first languages have difficulty with being intimate in this global friendship building context. Her view is supported by her opinion that when she communicates in English, she is soon caught up in the situation that she cannot find something to talk about. Thus, for her, what might start off as a seemingly fun talk quickly ends up not being fun anymore (Group interview 2, November 2013).

In relation to the metaphor of “deep” and “sincere” talks, the image of a “wall” often appears in students’ accounts of their relationships. For example, Hyunjin, another Korean student taking the Cambridge English program, stated that “when I got close [to foreign friends] to some extent, I don’t know whether this is an issue of language, but I feel a kind of a wall. I don’t get a feeling like getting intimate [with them] unlike with Koreans.” (Group interview 2, November 2013). Some Korean students feel that in their
global friendship, they pretend to be intimate and close. Junghyuk, for example, said; “For English ability, it is good not to meet Koreans and only to meet foreigners, but when I meet foreigners, I feel like, I pretend to be close but not sincerely close to them” (Interview, December 2013). To this end, the intertwining of Korean habitus, limited English proficiency, and the guilty of pretending to be close in global friendship forms a necessity or a justification regarding the allegiance to a Korean peer group in Korean students’ transnational life.

4.2 Cosmopolitan relationship-building as global “experience”

When Korean students are about to return to South Korea, they naturally reflect upon and evaluate their life and study in Toronto. Their reflection exposes a sort of ambiguity regarding the benefits of their educational investment. Above all, most Korean overseas students are concerned that their English has not improved as much as they hoped—a manifestation of linguistic insecurity as discussed in Chapter 3. They add that they should have studied harder or tried to meet and talk with native English-speaking locals. However, they do not claim that they have a feeling of regret. Rather, they argue that studying English abroad is a valuable “experience” (kyŏngŏm) in their life. They point out that they would not have had the experiences they had if they had not gone abroad. Such justification of their transnational investment is primarily grounded in their valuation of the experiences of global relationship building in Toronto. As Junghyuk stated:

Excerpt 7.11: Interview with Junghyuk (December 2013)
Junghyuk: I don’t regret coming to Toronto to study English abroad. It’s an unusual experience. I am satisfied, especially with meeting foreign friends. I don’t know about the case of Seoul, but in my hometown, it’s extremely rare to make a foreign friend. I made Japanese friends for the first time here and talked with them in English. This is really new and fun to me.

In his reflection on studying English abroad, Junghyuk argues that his experience of making foreign friends is most “unusual,” “new” and “fun.” He thinks that it is extremely difficult for this kind of global connection to take place in his hometown, a city
located in the Southern part of South Korean and believed to be demographically more homogenous and culturally less globalized. In fact, students from metropolitan cities such as Seoul similarly mentioned to me that meeting foreign friends and talking with them in English was a genuinely distinctive experience. Such ideas come from the imagination that South Korea is still an ethnically homogeneous nation-state and that contact with foreigners is limited to certain sites (e.g., language schools, foreigner clubs) or neighborhoods (e.g. Hongdae, Itaewon in Seoul) in Korea. They even assume that making Japanese friends, who come from a country geographically and perhaps culturally closest to South Korea, is not common in their home country. They do not think that multiculturalism is as much an everyday experience in Korea as in Toronto.

For Korean students, the purpose of global friendship building is valorized because it leads to intercultural communication through English. In Junghyuk’s words, he “talked with them (his classmates) in English.” During my research, Korean students reported that even though their English was accented and grammatically imperfect, they were able to communicate successfully with international students and had no difficulty with talking with them about everyday topics. The experience of communicating in English enables Korean students to claim that they have overcome fears and now have confidence in speaking English.

In fact, Korean students’ self-image as confident English speakers has a powerful effect on the justification of their investment in learning English. As J. S.-Y. Park (2009a) argues, the ideology of self-deprecation plays a key role in (re)producing the necessity of English learning in South Korea. In South Korea, the image of “bad” English speakers is stereotyped as one “who runs into foreigner (typically assumed to be a native speaker of English) in the street asking for directions, but who is unable to say anything because of his incompetence in English and because he feels extremely nervous and embarrassed” (Park & Wee, 2013, p 136). Given the ideologically laden meaning of overcoming “English fear,” Korean students’ feelings of confidence in English cannot be dismissed simply as an emotional gain. By saying to their friends and parents, “I don’t have a fear of speaking to foreigners,” they are free from this stereotype of bad English speakers and further justify their investment into English.
Interestingly, in spite of their re-signification of global relationship as a valuable experience for their English, Korean students are not entirely confident about the value of the experiences. They have not only linguistic insecurity (Chapter 3), but also cosmopolitan insecurity. The main cause of cosmopolitan insecurity is the fact that as seen above, cosmopolitan relationships are mainly formed and enjoyed through leisurely activities in which the linguistic and cultural exchanges are light-hearted, ludic, and informal. Thus, the experience of enjoyment may be readily trapped in, or relegated to, the public discourse of top’iyuhak (studying abroad to escape), as it represents overseas education as the practice of “excessive” consumption in which learners are believed to simply enjoy debauched foreign life rather than acquire useful skills and qualifications (Kang & Abelmann, 2011). This discourse naturally leads people to assume that this type of educational investment is a kind of “failure.” As Dongil states, this is why Korean students, including himself, use the term, kyŏngŏm (experience), to describe their cosmopolitan enjoyment when it comes to traveling and inter-ethnic mingling. This word is used to avert any meaning of failure regarding their study abroad and euphemize their studies as a global “experience” (Interview with Dongil, October 2013).

Despite their use of the word, kyŏngŏm, to describe their cosmopolitan relationships (See Excerpt 7.11), furthermore, similar to the case of linguistic insecurity, Korean students also confront the issue of the transferability of their global experiences into social and cultural capital for their employability. For Korean students, their cosmopolitan experiences are personally significant; they are good and memorable experiences. However, it is a totally different issue to transform their cosmopolitan experiences into narratives and talents that will be appreciated in the job market. As their cosmopolitan life is mostly governed by mundane and jocular exchanges of informal and popular cultures, Korean students are concerned about how to en-textualize (Blommaert, 2005) their global experiences within a global, neoliberal and knowledge-driven South Korean recruitment culture. This is a major conundrum that Korean students face upon their return.
5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored Korean students’ everyday practices of multiculturalism in building their global friendship with classmates. In everyday intermingling with classmates from various cultural backgrounds during lunchtime or after school, Korean students’ cultural and linguistic exchanges are not only confined to normative, official and formal patterns, but also expand into jocular and vulgar performativity. Such experiences of cosmopolitan relationship making not only serve as another source of enjoyment in their transnational life, but also grant them with increased intensity and embodiment of cosmopolitan sense. Thus, when they reflect upon their educational investment, a majority of Korean students value their experiences of building friendships with foreign classmates much more significantly than those of learning English within educational institutions such as in Lingua City.

Although Korean students’ version of everyday multiculturalism is established through their own experiences and valuations, their multicultural experiences contain ambivalence in terms of the acquisition of cosmopolitan capital and the transferability of that capital into their future careers. On the one hand, these cultural experiences are quite distinctive, given that their friends in Korea who have no overseas experiences not only have little transnational capital itself, but also few perceptive templates for the understanding of their cosmopolitan experiences. On the other hand, their embodied form of cultural capital is still latent in terms of the profitability for their future employment, as it should be transformed into other forms of capital that the Korean job market endorses (Park & Wee, 2012). Korean overseas students’ cosmopolitan experiences and relationships are considered valuable memories for individuals; however, they are not yet marketable skills within the Korean job market. Therefore, the strategic transformation of their cosmopolitan experiences into appealing corporate skills is what Korean learners face when they return to Korea and begin to seek a job.

Broadly speaking, in Korean students’ cosmopolitan practices, such as traveling and intercultural exchanges, linguistic and cultural nationalism plays an important role in their interpretation of intercultural experiences, and justifies the creation and maintenance of a national comfort zone. Within this context, they consider their (limited) English
proficiency to be one of the leading causes of intercultural fatigue and intra-ethnic group formation. This idea is also reproduced, as communication in Korean is natural, spontaneous, emotionally laden, and sincere. Through transnational experiences, Korean students thus confirm the importance and usefulness of their national language and further national sentiments and habitus, and strengthen the ideology of “English as language of Other” (J. S.-Y. Park, 2009a). While studying English abroad, Korean students thus construct a nationalist counterpart to the idea of English as a global language (Kubota, 2002; J. S.-Y. Park, 2009a).

However, it is worth noting that the persisting national boundary of language and culture is interestingly in parallel with the fact that it is their English ability that allows them to enjoy their cosmopolitan life more fully, and with the fact that it is their translingual and transcultural practices that make their cosmopolitan relations grow closer. Korean students mobilize nonstandard forms of English and other languages for mundane and everyday cosmopolitan experiences and relations. They also employ informal, non-conformist, popular forms of ethnic (sub)cultures as a way of enjoying the moment of intercultural exchanges and cementing cosmopolitan relationship. Although Korean students are concerned that these cosmopolitan experiences will not be fully legitimated within the South Korean markets of English and labor, it is also true that these cosmopolitan experiences offer opportunities to rethink meanings of forms and uses of language and culture from an alternative perspective. At this moment, however, it seems more reasonable to say that it remains unclear how Korean students now make sense of their translingual and transcultural practices and will mobilize them in their later life.
CHAPTER EIGHT
CONCLUSION

The previous chapters have examined what normative ideologies of English study abroad and the English language are established, and how Korean students negotiate the ideological effects on life and learning in Toronto. The remaining question then may be related to how, upon their return to South Korea, the students re-signify their overseas experiences and mobilize resources that they acquired during English study abroad. This question looks compelling, in that the values gained through their educational and language consumption can be realized when they find that their linguistic and cultural experiences help to increase their employability in “decent” jobs. In other words, Korean students, as potential job seekers, have the burden of converting their material and symbolic resources into legitimate capital in the labor market.

My two fieldworks in South Korea and my continued contact with key Korean informants were originally planned to answer this question. However, I decided to leave it unanswered, as I learned that I need to observe their life trajectories over a longer period. This decision was made for two reasons. First, even though more than two years passed after their return, more than half of the students who participated in this research were still seeking employment even though some of them had already graduated from their universities. This means that the process of transforming their linguistic and cultural resources into legitimate capital is still undergoing. I expect that this job-seeking stage may persist as Korea’s labor market for young adults currently is getting grimmer.

The second reason I chose not to further pursue this final question is that the persisting stage of job-seeking has seemed to change my informants’ attitudes toward learning, job-seeking, and life. In fact, when I met key informants during my first field research in South Korea, they showed me their hope and passion regarding their future. However, during my second research trip there, they did not reveal a similar intensity of emotions. What I read from them was a kind of ambiguity over their future. As they witnessed how their educational and language investment did not lead to expected rewards, they did not seem to hold an optimistic view of their future. However, they did not look fully pessimistic as well, as they still had the socioeconomic position coming
from middle-class family backgrounds. Additionally, they had financial, social and cultural resources that they could mobilize if needed.

Berlant (2011) argues that the life state of neither optimism nor abandonment is a moment of self-suspension, which occurs when social actors do not exactly know what to do and how to live—a kind of *impasse*. In this sense, the South Korean young adults I met were at an impasse in terms of their continued search for a “good” life. They looked to consider whether they should continue to live their lives as they had done so far, or to find an alternative life strategy. Confronted by their struggles, I decided that my job was to wait for now and see how their life would unfold, assuming that their life trajectories would go in unexpected directions.

Therefore, in this conclusion chapter, I will first give sketches, but not analysis, of my observations regarding Korean English study abroad students’ life upon their return to Korea. My intention here is not to judge whether their educational investment succeeded or failed, but to show their struggle and impasse with learning the global language and culture in neoliberal and uncertain times. Following the descriptions of their post-journey life, I will revisit the concept of language consumption while illuminating contradictions that my informants faced. Finally, I will give implications for language learning in late capitalism with a particular focus on the issue of student consumerism.

1 After going home

When I visited South Korea in April 2014, it has not been a long time since we last met in Toronto. Insung first returned to South Korea in August 2013, and Heejun’s return was the last, which was in March 2014. As it had not been a long time since they left Toronto, they still had embodied feelings and connections to the city, and they said that my visit and presence reminded them of their life and feelings there. During my visit, we talked, ate and drank. The meetings and talks informed me about how they were evaluating their English ability, how they were trying to continue English learning, and how they were re-interpreting global experiences.

Above all, their evaluation of their improved English ability was quite ambiguous. For sure, they showed confidence in their improved oral English ability, telling me about
stories of their experiences of talking with foreigners on the street or at the campus. Their recollections of these kinds of events showed a great change in their attitude toward English (Chapter 7). However, they were annoyed that, upon their return, they felt the need to invest additional money, time, and effort in order to obtain high scores from standardized English tests (e.g., TOEIC or other speaking tests) as a requirement for job applications (Chapter 3). Actually, what they first did upon return was to register at test-prep schools, because they thought that they should get a high score before they lost yŏngŏe taehan kam (English sense). One interesting point was concerned with the choice of English speaking tests; they preferred OPIc to TOEIC speaking, believing that the former assessed more spontaneous English oral competence in everyday contexts, compared to the latter whose questions and answers were perceived as more formalized and patterned. They reproduced the ideological opposition of “dead” and “living” English in their selection of OPIc (Chapter 3).

While studying “dead” English, they did their best to maintain, if not increase, their “living” English; for instance, Geonyoung registered in an offline English speaking club via an online café, and participated in a weekly meeting to practice oral English; Sangwoo volunteered to teach English for basic learners in an English speaking club and had opportunities to talk with other volunteers who spoke English more proficiently; Haejin participated in a student club for international students at his college; Dongil practiced English speaking with Filipino/a English speakers over the phone, which is a commercial English learning service called chŏnhwa yŏngŏ (phone English). Along with such institutional and commercial venues, the most common method for them to keep up with their English proficiency was to watch midŭ (American TV dramas and shows). However, they commonly told me about their concern that they had been noticing that their oral English competence was decreasing rapidly. They reported that their pronunciations of /ɪ/ and /ɛ/, which do not exist in the Korean phonetic system and thus function as icons of native-like English pronunciations to Koreans, were becoming more unnatural or non-native-like. Additionally, they stated that their speaking rate was becoming slower, and their fluency was diminishing, as they kept thinking in Korean first before speaking in English—all counter-features of “living” English (Chapter 3). In an
environment with a limited number of opportunities to speak English, all of them were struggling not to lose the linguistic benefits from English study abroad experience.

However, the major barrier against their “living” English was not South Korea’s “monolingual” environment, but the “reality” that they now needed to continue to study and live harder than before in order to work toward their future employment. University students returned to their universities and resumed studies in their majors. Senior students not only needed to finish their studies in order to graduate, but they were also actively engaged in preparing qualifications and dossiers for job applications. For the recent college graduates, their lives were not much different from those of senior students; in particular, they needed to take English tests again as the certified periods of their former English test scores were expired. Junior students, especially male students who returned from two breaks in their college study—military service and English study abroad—embarked on the project of spec developments (cf. Abelmann et al., 2009; H. Cho, 2015); they studied harder to get a good GPA and participated in award competitions, as well as navigated various venues for their English use and learning. Although most of them had anticipated that their post-overseas life would be tight and tough in terms of time and energy, they expressed that it was more exhaustive than they had hoped for.

Essentially, my Korean informants’ lives in South Korea were in stark contrast to their lives in Toronto, which they described as “the time when they were required only to study English.” They missed its idyllic moments of leisure and break. They recalled walking on the way to homestay in the Toronto summer, playing baseball games Saturday mornings, hilarious talks with foreign friends in Western pubs, and the night view of Manhattan on the top of the Empire State Building during their trip to New York City. They also told me that such a hot early Summer day in South Korea reminded them of Tim Hortons’s Iced Capp, which led them to have craving for the franchise’s French Vanilla coffee, their favorite drink in the freezing winter in Toronto, as well as the recital of a “fun” expression that they learned and often used, “double-double.”

Such nostalgia for life in Toronto also involved multiple senses. They reported that they often retrieved and saw photos of their studies abroad uploaded and tagged on Facebook, or visited Google Map and saw the street views of neighborhoods where they and their friends lived, their school, and other memorable sites. These stories suggested to
me that their experience of English study abroad had been reinterpreted not as struggles over English learning (Chapters 4 and 5) but as a cosmopolitan life full of enjoyment and leisure (Chapters 6 and 7). They expressed their desire to escape from their current life stressing further skills development for employment, and wished to “go back” to Toronto. However, they were clearly aware that it was not now a possible option for their life strategy.

In the Fall of 2014, senior students began to apply for employment, as the second part of annual open recruitment (*haban’gi kongch’ae*) had begun. Facebook postings by them showed me their stress and passions for seeking employment. In the open recruitment period, Dongil, who tended to spend time with Japanese students in Toronto as he could speak the Japanese language, was recruited by a Japanese logistics company. Jungmin, who had worked in a large South Korean company for one year before studying English abroad, obtained an engineering job at a Swiss multinational company. Dongseok, whose major was naval architecture and ocean engineering, was employed by one of the largest shipbuilding companies in the world, which was enjoying boom in the market at that point. Unfortunately, I could not get “good” news from other students that I came in contact with in Toronto. I also found that their online activities on Facebook were not as active as before.

When I visited South Korea again in late May 2015, after that year’s early open recruitment period had just ended, I met some of my informants. Above all, they did not actively talk about their English and English study abroad experience as they did during my visit the year before. Most of them finally succeeded in obtaining “sufficient” scores on English standardized tests. One of the dilemmas for them, however, was that although they still believed that English competence was an important skill in getting a job, it was not the only qualification determining successful employment. Furthermore, as their improved English competence allowed them to access groups of more proficient Korean English speakers, they realized that their English competence was not “sufficiently” high. Geonyoung, who was still participating in an English speaking club, said, “there were actually a number of ‘good’ English speakers in South Korea.” In the meantime, most of them were still striving to find a decent job, but South Korea’s labor market did not appear to do well due to a repeated crisis in the national economy as well as a global
downturn in business. Under such circumstances, what they could do was to “be prepared and wait” while hoping for successful employment. As ch’wijunsaeng (job-seeking students), they were still living with their parents, to whom they felt both grateful and sorry for their continuing support. They truly hoped to get a “decent” job, be financially independent, and be a “good” daughter and son as soon as possible. English, the labor market, and family relations, all seemed to be at an impasse. In that stage of job-seeking, Korean students could not completely negate or fully ratify the social, institutional, and personal situations surrounding them.

2 Revisiting consumption of language and culture

In this research, I have approached language learning as ideology and practice of the consumption of language and culture. Resonating with McElhinny's (2016) proposal on the critics of neoliberalism, my analytic aim has been not to “spot evidence” (p. 198) of language learning as consumption, but to “map precisely these forms of unevenness and contradiction” (p. 189) through the lens of political economy. For this purpose, I have demonstrated the ways in which language learners mobilize and valorize various forms of linguistic, cultural, and semiotic resources in exchange for other desirable resources. Additionally, I have showed what kinds of social discourses and categories are linked to the processes of consumption. I have attempted to analyze and describe the culture of consumption that emerges in Korean students’ trajectories of language learning.

In analyzing South Korean students’ everyday practice of consumption, I locate two meanings of consumption: 1) investment and 2) leisure. These seemingly conflicting meanings are connected by the concept of self-suspension. I view consumption as leisure as a temporal moment of suspending the normative ways of learning and life that are governed by the dominant discourse of consumption as investment. In this sense, one of the meaningful findings of this research project is to reveal the ways in which the discourse of language investment, training, and skills developments are linked to the alternative discourse of cultural consumption, playing, and lifestyle and leisure activities in the late capitalist market of language and culture within the human capital regime. Korean students enjoy their life through cultural consumption such as self-planned travels
and light-hearted everyday mingling, in order to escape from their obsession and stress over the “efficiency” and “effectiveness” of their investment in English. Moreover, they enjoy leisure activities with their intra-ethnic friends, in order to avert transnational fatigue stemming from intense and constant intercultural exchange and to sustain or restore their life energy in a comfort zone. In this sense, I claim that the public discourses criticizing short-term study abroad, ones in which study abroad students live hedonic lives and in which the educational outcomes are meager, illuminate a partial view on learners’ life and learning trajectories.

The meaning of consumption as investment stresses the importance of the material conditions for language learning. As English study abroad is a set of language education commodities in a private education sector, financial affordability is the most fundamental condition for students to access the market. Furthermore, the issue of who supports overseas education has profound consequences for learners’ learning and life during their English study abroad. In fact, Korean students’ instrumental, calculative, and strategic orientation to English study abroad is implicated in the fact that their English study abroad is funded by themselves or their parents. The accountability over their educational expenditure drives them to make an ideological distinction in valuable forms of English. In addition, Korean students tend to stratify English speakers by their authenticity, proficiency and intimacy, and constantly navigate educational goods and services, in order to maximize rewards from their educational investment. Thus, this thesis suggests that it is important to view language learning as a materially conditioned practice rather than simply an exercise of handling psychological and linguistic elements.

The material conditions for language investment, or simply the issue of who funds the opportunity to learn English, has broader implications for the ways of learning and life in the neoliberalizing education system. For instance, we may ask how students in a government-sponsored language program govern their life and learning, and how their indebtedness to the supporting government affects their beliefs and practices regarding language learning, institutional policies, labor ethics, and citizenship (cf. Allan, 2014).

In fact, Korean young adults’ financial investment in English learning is based on the promise that a good command of English will bring out benefits for students’ social mobility and wellbeing. Especially, a number of Korean college students are led to this
expensive but innovative way of English learning, as the competition over decent employment is getting tougher within the Korean labor market. They are convinced that “good” English will increase their employability in global job markets. However, this research has shown that their educational consumption as an investment does not always unfold as anticipated or does not necessarily bring out what was initially desired. These “broken” parts of educational and language investments are revealed through two major tensions and contradictions that Korean students in English study abroad face in their trajectories of English learning overseas: cosmopolitan leisure consumption and “self-segregation” (Abelmann, 2009). First, in spite of the discursive emphasis on studying seriously and living frugally, Korean students become more inclined to enjoy their life through tourism and everyday mingling. Second, in spite of the importance of the discourse of immersion (Doerr, 2013, 2015) in local authentic culture, Korean students build and justify stronger memberships to their co-ethnic groups. These features may dismiss the necessity of English study abroad and bolster the position that it is a “failed” investment and an “excessive” consumption (cf. Nelson, 2000, 2006). This study claims that the “broken” part of educational and linguistic promise should not be taken as the lack of students’ accountability in their self-developing project.

In this light, we should ask who circulates the promise of English for what, and who most benefits from the ideological construction of English as necessity. In this research context, the English teaching industry and the study abroad agency industry are involved in the production and circulation of the necessity of English learning. Given that these businesses are sectors of the language industry, their practices may be seen as marketing strategies. However, the stakeholders who are often neglected in this process are hiring companies. They want to recruit applicants who already have a good command of English rather than invest their resources into training their employees. From a cost perspective for human resource development, it can be said that corporations have benefited from applicants’ self-development of English skills.

The culture of consumption as leisure among South Korean study abroad students tends to take on more complex and ambiguous characteristics, as it is articulated with the culture of consumption as investment at certain moments. Especially, there is a tension as to whether their leisure activities should be seen as trapped in the neoliberal logics of life
and learning or as motivated and maintained by non-neoliberal types of exchanges such as friendship. Throughout this thesis, I have highlighted that Korean students’ leisurely consumption can be regarded as being recaptured within the neoliberal regime, 1) when they struggle to transform their cosmopolitan experiences into legitimate cultural capital and 2) when their leisurely activities eventually lead them to study continually and even harder. Thus, the focus of my analysis has been on the exploration of these two processes of transformation.

For sure, the processes of transformation are dynamic and complex. One of the points that clearly reveal the dynamics and complexities is concerned with how Korean students manage their national identity and resources that play an important role in mediating their transnational learning and life. Basically, they mobilize the Korean language and various forms of cultures (e.g., official, youth, and popular cultures) as resources for intercultural exchanges and communication (Chapter 7). However, they also discover that their ethno-racial positions and resources are differently valued and often stereotyped by locals and other international students (cf. McElhinny et al., 2012). In a similar fashion, Korean students value and stereotype other ethno-racial groups of classmates and friends, based on their cultural dispositions (cf. Pyke, 2010). The transnational fatigue that makes Korean students form a more intimate relationship with other Koreans should be understood as a consequence of such bi-directional processes of stereotyping (cf. Reyes, 2009).

The co-ethnic affiliations of Korean students also suggest that building intimacy is an important element for enjoyment and leisure activities. Namely, intimacy with other Korean friends serves as emotional resources for their transnational learning and life. However, their valuation of intimacy in English study abroad does not remain within the intra-ethnic group formation. They also pursue intimacy with non-Korean English speakers. This is because they appreciate emotional supports from interlocutors when communicating with them. They hope that English-speaking interlocutors will take care of their “bad” English not only linguistically, but also emotionally, by showing a “willingness” to communicate with them. Furthermore, they hope that continued and solid relationships entailed by intimacy will offer opportunities for quality communication with English speakers beyond superficial and routine patterns. However,
as temporary visitors, Korean students find that it is highly difficult to build such an intimate relationship with locals and other international students other than a romantic relationship. As a result, South Koreans’ desire for intimate English speaking opportunities is often met by English speakers who are less proficient or have a less valuable type of English in the global language market, such as Filipino/a English speakers. This mechanism of intimacy shows that the consumption of language is not just governed by the element of authenticity, but rather by a matter of social relationships.

Korean students’ valuation of intimacy suggests that emotions and feelings play an important role in valuing and consuming language and culture (McElhinny, 2010, 2016; Yang, 2014). In fact, the most prevalent emotion in accessing this language market is comprised of personal anxiety and insecurity (Hiramoto & Park, 2014). Korean students recognize the necessity of studying English abroad, as they are anxious that the lack of a good command of English and global experience would make them fail in skills development and self-developing projects, which may further effect successful employment in the future. Thus, they tend to constantly figure out their positions in the labor market in terms of their English proficiency and employability (Brown, et al., 2003; Brown, et al., 2011). However, although their efforts increase their relative position in the job market, there is a structural issue; they cannot avoid always being positioned in-between the more competent and the less competent. Their position of being stuck in-between invariably causes insecurity over the values of even acquired skills and qualifications, and leads them to not only navigate toward “better” opportunities for learning and experiences, but also locate effective ways of converting their skills and qualifications into more attractive forms of capital (cf. Allan, 2014).

More importantly, anxiety and insecurity brings out other sets of affects and emotions during their English study abroad: indebtedness to their parents who financially support their English study abroad (Chapter 2), guilt about hanging out with Koreans (Chapter 4), envy for their friends who hang out only with non-Korean students (Chapter 4), dissatisfaction from communicative courses and satisfaction from intensive courses (Chapter 5), a feeling of burn-out from utilitarian and instrumental orientations to learning and life (Chapter 6), fatigue from intercultural communication and encounters (Chapter 6), and enjoyment as a way of dealing with such negative feelings (Chapters 6
and 7). This research, thus, suggests that the analysis of the enterprise of dealing with such feelings and emotions may be a convincing pathway to understanding sociolinguistic trajectories of people in uncertain neoliberal times. Moreover, in order to locate a point of solidarity and social change, it is necessary to map what feelings and emotions each social group or class shares or distinctively exhibits (McElhinny, 2016).

3 Revisiting language education in late capitalism

Another contradiction in Korean students’ sociolinguistic trajectories is that despite their initial expectation that English study abroad offers more naturalistic situations for communication in English, they are more likely to learn English in pedagogically fostered settings and through intensive learning (Chapters 4 and 5). Their dependence on pedagogically informed resources is a result of their realization that immersing themselves into local communities does not ensure the activation of language learning because of language barriers and the lack of feedback on their English. They judge that more valuable learning experiences can take place in language schools or other pedagogical settings such as tutoring. Thus, Korean students’ navigation of different language teaching commodities in educational institutes is the practice of self-reflection on their educational needs and strategy, rather than their indolence to remain in a safe place.

What is noticeable in Korean learners’ navigating educational services for better learning is that Korean students mobilize various pedagogical principles that educational institutes incorporate in designing their curricular, including student-centered learning and teachers as facilitators in communicative language teaching. For instance, Korean students at Lingua City employed course selection and change policies informed by student-centered learning in order to “shop” classes and teachers (Chapter 5). They also valued the figure of teachers as facilitators as the ideal type of teachers who could help with their communicative English (Chapter 5). Moreover, they recognized effects of feedback for their English learning (Chapters 4 and 5). What matters here is not their recognition of the necessities of pedagogical components, but the fact that these pedagogical elements come into play as criteria in evaluating educational commodities,
services, and providers. Such consumerist behaviors of Korean language learners look unfamiliar to language educators who are trained to understand the importance of learner-centered teaching, teachers as facilitators, and appropriate feedback provision. I should confess that I, as a language educator, felt uncomfortable with my informants’ stratification of classmates (Chapter 4) and class “shopping” (Chapter 5) at Lingua City, even though these practices were sociolinguistically revealing.

I view such learners’ behaviors of evaluating educational services and providers as student consumerism. The primary reason for student consumerism is that South Korean English study abroad is an educational consumption in the private education sector. Learners in private education are positioned as consumers who should make reasonable decisions regarding their educational commodities and evaluate their effectiveness (Miller, 2016). The private language teaching industry often adapts innovative teaching principles and methodologies as marketing components or “commodifies” them as sellable goods (Block, 2010; Gray, 2010; Pegrum, 2004).

However, the emergence of educational consumers and consumerism in education may be the more urgent, given that public school systems are incorporating market-oriented elements in the wake of neoliberalization (Collins, 2001; Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005) and given that parents who distrust the public education system are entering into private sectors to help their children acquire cultural and educational capital (Katz, 2012; Kim, 2013; Park, 2013). Thus, in order to consider possibilities of language education in late capitalist society, we need to ask the following questions: How do we make sense of the learners with consumer identity? How can we reconceptualize critical pedagogy in market-oriented schools?

When it comes to the (im)possibility of language education in late capitalist society, this study illuminates that the issue of language learning cannot be resolved without broader understandings of sociocultural and political economic conditions (Heller, 2007a; Heller & Martin-Jones, 2001; Piller, 2012). It has highlighted that the motivation of English learning is closely linked to the issue of the underemployment of Korean youth. It seems quite evident that without a reform of the labor market, some Korean adults cannot help but invest their material resources into more valuable forms of
English, and other students, in particular, those who have little material resources, are more likely to be marginalized from better educational opportunities and employment.

However, the understandings of the material conditions of language learning often pose an ethical question as to the role of language pedagogy. If the access to language learning is materially conditioned and instrumentally motivated, the practice of teaching language is more likely to correspond to the practice of granting language learners with opportunities to acquire linguistic capital that they desire. What is worth noting here is that language educators may also reproduce the ideology of linguistic instrumentalism (Kubota, 2011b; Robichaud & Schutter, 2012; Wee, 2003) by assuming that teaching English will help language learners with their upward social mobility or wellbeing. In other words, the practice of teaching English may proliferate the promise of English as a valuable commodity, while ignoring that this powerful language ideology is connected to neoliberal transformations in education and social governing for the production of neoliberal subjectivity (cf. Flores, 2013). Thus, this research asks whether we can imagine (critical) pedagogy that is not captured in the ideology of linguistic instrumentalism. In a sense, criticality of language pedagogy in late capitalism should problematize the shared assumption of the possibility of language education (Bieta, 1998; Haque, 2012; Rancière, 1991) and locate an imagination to challenge linguistic instrumentalism leading to the commodification and consumption of language (e.g., Blommaert, 2008; Chun, 2015; Cummins & Early, 2011, Heller, 2011; Park & Wee, 2012; Pennycook, 2010; Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015).

In fact, I hope that my informants will show an alternative to learning and using English beyond linguistic instrumentalism in their later life, even though they are now in the moment of struggle and impasse. Then, I will listen to their voices again.
REFERENCES


Nah, Y., & Kwon, I.-S. (2010). Sinjayuju ijok chuch’e, han’guk taehaksaengdurui sŏnhubae kwan’gyee taehan pip’an’gwa sŏngch’al [Critiques and reflections on Korean colleges focusing on relationships among students]. *Journal of Lifelong Education*, 16(2), 117-144.


Appendix 1
Secondary Informants

1. Korean students

- **Jiwon** (female) was a student of medicine at one of the top-tier universities in South Korea. I interviewed her because I noticed that, at Lingua City, she hung out only with non-Korean, especially Latin American, students.
- **Joochan** (male) was a student of engineering at a local public university in South Korea. He was a friend of my wife’s younger brother who was studying English in Toronto in 2013. I interviewed him in the first phase of my fieldwork. He was a student at a large-sized language school in Toronto (but not Lingua City).
- **Sangmoo** (male) was a student of business administration at a local public university in South Korea. He knew most of the Korean students in the focal informant group of this study, but did not have a close relationship with them, as he spent most of his time with his Korean girlfriend whom he met at Lingua City.
- **Jeongho** (male) was a student of engineering at a private university in Seoul, South Korea. I came to know him as he was a member of the baseball team that Minsik organized. He was a student at a large-sized language school in Toronto (but not Lingua City).
- **Yunseok** (male), **Jiyoung** (female), **Hyunjin**, (female) and **Joori** (female) were all students of the Cambridge English course that I observed at Lingua City. I conducted two group interviews with them during my classroom observation.
- **Naesang** (male) was Geonyoung’s close friend. He was a student at a local private university in South Korea. He came to Canada with a working holiday visa. He studied English at Lingua City for the first couple of months, and then began to work in a Korean restaurant in Toronto.
- **Insu** (male) was a student of engineering at a local private university in South Korea. I met and interviewed him when I did fieldwork in South Korea in May 2014. At that time, he was thinking about studying English abroad.
2. Non-Korean students

- **Takeshi** (male) was a Japanese student at Lingua City and Dongil’s close friend. However, they became estranged after their trip to NYC (See Chapter 6)
- **Murilo** (male) and **Erika** (female) were Brazilian students at Lingua City. They were taking a university pathway program to enter colleges in Toronto. Murilo was racially White, and Erika was a third-generation Brazilian Japanese.

3. Study abroad agent

**Sangkyung** (male) was a Korean immigrant who ran a small-sized study abroad agency near the intersection of Yonge and Bloor.

4. Teachers and staff members at Lingua City

- **Tiffany** (female) was a Korean immigrant who worked as a cultural counselor for Korean students at Lingua City. Her duties were to address Korean students’ educational and life concerns and correspond with Korean study abroad agents. Despite an English-only policy at Lingua City, Korean students were allowed to speak to her in Korean.
- **Jennifer** (female) was a teacher and academic manager at Lingua City. As an OISE graduate student, she introduced Lingua City to me. While I was conducting fieldwork, she was promoted to an academic director whose duties were to design curricula, create teaching materials, and consult with students for their course choices.
- **Robin** (male), **Amanda** (female), **Susan** (female), and **John** (male) were teachers at Lingua City. I observed their classes and talked with them during my classroom observations.
### Appendix 2

List of Classroom Observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Course title</th>
<th>Type of course</th>
<th>No. of observed lessons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicative</td>
<td>Low-Intermediate</td>
<td>core</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicative</td>
<td>High-Intermediate</td>
<td>core</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>High-Intermediate</td>
<td>core</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Global Business</td>
<td>core</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Business writing</td>
<td>optional</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Business listening</td>
<td>optional</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Business presentation</td>
<td>optional</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>Film</td>
<td>optional</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>Colloquial English</td>
<td>optional</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test preparation</td>
<td>Cambridge English</td>
<td>core</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>optional</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>optional</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 3

#### Lessons Summary

1. Amanda’s lessons (Low-intermediate Communicative English)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lessons</th>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1       | Talking about time        | 1. **Lecture:** The teacher introduces temporal prepositions and phrases, *for, since, ago* and *by the time*. She explains with what forms of tense these prepositions/phrases are used (e.g., present perfect, present perfect progressive, simple tense)  
2. **Drill in pairs:** The teacher writes questions using the target forms on the whiteboard and the students practice them with a partner. The samples of the questions are: *What have you been doing since you were a kid? How many years ago did you start learning English?* The teacher joins each pair’s practice and gives feedback on students’ use of the forms. |
| 2       | TV show hosting           | 1. **Writing in pairs:** In pairs, the students write a script for a role playing activity. The teacher gives individual feedback on each pair’s script.  
2. **Role-play:** The students present their role-play to the whole class.  
3. **Grammar review:** The teacher reviews grammar for tomorrow’s quiz.  
4. **Vocabulary game for review:** In groups, the students review words in a game format. The students write words on a piece of small paper words that they have learned in this class, and then they shuffle all of them together. One member picks up a card and explains the meaning of the word on the card. The other members guess the word. |
| 3       | Talking about experience  | 1. **Lecture:** The teacher explains the structure, *have ever past-participle* with examples.  
2. **Drill in pairs and in the whole class:** The teacher distributes an activity sheet, *Find someone who...* for *present perfect* practice. In pairs, the students take turns asking and answering the questions on the sheet. After the pairs finish their work, the teacher points to an individual student and ask him or her to read a question and answer from their sheet. The teacher |
289

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lessons</th>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>• Course introduction</td>
<td>1. Course introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Nervousness management</td>
<td>2. Lecture: The teacher explains characteristics of good presenters and ways of managing nervousness during a presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Presentation structure</td>
<td>3. Short instant presentation: Students give a one-minute presentation about their country. The teacher forms a group of three students and makes them take turns presenting. After one student’s presentation is finished, the other two students in the group give feedback on the one’s performance. When all students have had a turn, the teacher shuffles students and reassign them to a new group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Lecture: The teacher explains the basic structure of presentation (introduction, body, and conclusion) and focuses on the introduction part. He introduces the concept of “hook” and the steps to create an effective introduction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>• Presentation practice</td>
<td>1. Mock presentation: The teacher assigns students to a group of three. Each student in the group gives a mock presentation for tomorrow’s actual presentation, and after one student’s presentation, the other two students give feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Note card technique</td>
<td>2. Lecture: The teacher introduces a note card technique to students and explains why note cards are</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

gives feedback on students’ grammar and pronunciations.

3. Grammar game: This is a variation of the drinking game, *Never have I ever*. In a group, a student starts with the statement using *I have never...* The students in the group figure out who has ever done what the speaker has not.

4. Wrap-up

1. *Watching a movie* (movie title: Cellular): Watching the movie, the students complete the worksheet that the teacher distributed, which contains various types of questions about the movie, and English vocabulary and expressions used in the movie.

2. *Vocabulary game*: The same activity as the one in lesson 2.

3. *Vocabulary review*: The teacher reviews vocabulary that she covered that week.

2. John’s lessons (Presentation)
needed and how they are organized. The teacher highlights that presenters should not read their scripts and should maintain eye-contacts with their audience.

3. Individual works and feedback session (concurrent): Students finish their scripts and create note cards that they will use for their presentation. The teacher has an individual session with each student to give feedback on their scripts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3</th>
<th>Short presentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Practice: All students individually practice their presentations. The teacher walks around the classroom, listens to each student’s presentation, and if necessary, gives feedback.
| 2. Presentation (first round): The teacher assigns students to a group of three and sets a timer for each presentation. Each member of a group presents and then has a question and answer period with the other students. The teacher visits each group and listens to presentations. After all of the students finish their presentations, the teacher wraps up the activity and gives general feedback to the whole class, such as areas where students need to pay attention in order to better perform.
| 3. Presentation (second round): The teacher reassigns students to a new group, and students give their presentations again in the new group. Other components are identical with the first round. |

---

3. Susan’s lessons (Colloquial English)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lessons</th>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1       | Winter Sports  | 1. *Warm-up talk*: The teacher distributes a sheet with questions on winter sports such as “Have you been to a ski resort? Tell me about it” or “Is skiing or snowboarding more popular in your country?” Students in a group of 3 or 4 discuss them. The teacher participates in each group’s conversation. When all the students are done, the teacher discusses the questions with the whole class, and introduces a couple of colloquial expressions.
|         |                | 2. *Sample dialogue*: The teacher distributes a sample dialogue script on the topic, containing 21 turns and 26 colloquial expressions in bold. A pair of students first read the script, taking a role. The teacher writes the expressions on the whiteboard and then go through the |
meanings, usage, and examples of them with the whole class.

2 Slang adjectives

1. **Guessing meanings:** The teacher distributes a sheet containing 15 slang adjectives. A pair of students read through them and guess the meanings. The teacher writes the expressions on the whiteboard and participate in each group’s discussion to help them guess the right meanings. After the group activity is done, the teacher goes through the meanings, usage, examples, and similar adjectives with the whole class.

2. **Creating and presenting a dialogue:** A pair of students create a dialogue on the situation that the teacher gives: “It’s Saturday night. You and your partner are ice-skating at Harbourfront. The DJ is playing some good tunes.” The teacher goes to each pair, and give students help and reminds them of the expressions covered. Finally, each pair presents their script.

3 **Wordteasers**

1. **Game activity:** In a group of 3 or 4 students, one student picks up a card and reads a starter sentence on the card containing an idiom. The other students guess the meaning, and all of them continue to talk based on the conversation starter. The teacher goes to each group and participates in the game. The teacher reassigns students to new groups every 20 minute.
Appendix 4
Transcription Conventions

(( ))  some actions
(    )  contextual information
(1.4)  pause in seconds and tenths
(...)   ellipsis
,       slight pause
=       latching
**bald**  emphasis
[  ]    overlapping
[xxx]  unintelligible
Appendix 5
List of Documents

1. *Language Travel Magazine* (http://www.studytravel.network/magazine/)

   “Korea Tested” (October 2015)
   (http://www.studytravel.network/magazine/issues/october2015/oct15-agencysurvey)

   “Canadian stability” (October 2015)
   (http://www.hothousemedia.com/ltm/ltmbackissues/oct15web/oct15marketanalysis.html)

   “Canada’s challenge” (October 2014)
   (http://www.hothousemedia.com/ltm/ltmbackissues/oct14web/oct14marketanalysis.html)

   “Korea’s hard times” (March 2014)
   (http://www.studytravel.network/magazine/archive/march2014)

   “Canada gets serious” (August 2013)
   (http://www.hothousemedia.com/ltm/ltmbackissues/aug13web/aug13marketanalysis.htm)

   “Canada’s fusion” (August 2012)
   (http://www.hothousemedia.com/ltm/ltmbackissues/aug12web/aug12marketanalysis.htm)

2. English study abroad guidebooks

   미국 어학연수를 시작하다 (2013; *Start to study English abroad in the U.S.*)
   (http://www.aladin.co.kr/shop/wproduct.aspx?ItemId=59739848)

   캐나다 어학연수 백만원 줄이는 백가지 방법 (2012; *A hundred ways to save a million Won while studying English abroad in Canada*)
   (http://www.aladin.co.kr/shop/wproduct.aspx?ItemId=83902528)

   어학연수 꼭 성공하기 (2011; *Be successful in English Study Abroad*)
   (http://www.aladin.co.kr/shop/wproduct.aspx?ItemId=12756994)


   “영어의 기본기 가능하는 평가 도구, 기업이 원하는 실무 능력 'TOEIC’” (October 2014; “‘TOEIC’ is an evaluation tool for assessing basic English ability and a practical workplace skill that corporations desire”)
   (http://newsletter.toeic.co.kr/201410/index.html?page=4)
“취업준비생 인터뷰: 취업 이후에도 체계적인 어학 공부는 계속되어야 한다.”
(April 2014; “Interviews with job seekers: Systematic English study must continue even after being employed”)

“2013 년 기업의 TOEIC & TOEIC Speaking 활용 현황” (February 2014; “The 2013 use of TOEIC and TOEIC Speaking in corporations”)

“2013 년 TOEIC & TOEIC Speaking 정기시험 성적 분석” (February 2014; “The 2013 analysis of TOEIC and TOEIC Speaking scores and information”)

“GS 건설, 신입사원 선발 시 TOEIC Speaking Test 실시” (April 2008; “GS Engineering and Construction implements TOEIC Speaking test when hiring new employees”)

“토익시대는 갔다고? 현실 모르는 소리!” (February 2008; “Has a TOEIC era gone? That is not a reality!”)

4. Newspapers

“나는 ‘등골브레이커’다” (Hankuk Ilbo, August 27, 2014; “I am a ‘Spine Breaker’”).

“고비용 어학연수 부추기는 기업들” (Seoul Shinmun, December 7, 2011; “Corporations egging on high-cost English study abroad”)

“삼성, OPIc 도입 추진 … 토익점수만 높은 ‘영어병어리’ 안뽑는다” (The Korean Economic Daily, October 28, 2007; “Samsung seeking to introduce OPIc … will not hire ‘English-dumb’ applicants who simply have high scores of TOEIC”)

Appendix 6
Translation Samples

Sample 1: Excerpt from a document (English study abroad guidebook, see p. 49)

Original text

어학연수 꼭 가야할까요?
이 시대를 살아가는 대학생들에게 없어서는 안될 필수 능력을 하나 꺼내라면, 거의 모두가 ‘영어’를 꺼낼 것입니다. 세계의 중심에 서기 위해 무한경쟁을 하고 있는 기업들에게 ‘세계와 소통할 수 있는 언어’는 필수 요건이고, 그러자면 인재를 채용할 때 영어를 기본 중의 기본 조건으로 고려하게 되니까요.

Literal translation

Should I go abroad to study English?
If one is asked to choose a necessary skill indispensable to undergraduates living in this era, almost everyone will choose ‘English.’ ‘The language to communicate with the world’ is a prerequisite for companies doing endless competition to stand in the centre of the world, so then presumably they will consider English as the most fundamental of the fundamental qualifications when hiring a talent.

Edited translation

Should I go abroad to study English?
If one is asked to choose a necessary skill indispensable to undergraduates living in this era, almost everyone will choose ‘English.’ ‘The language to communicate with the world’ is a prerequisite for companies which are faced with endless competition to stand in the centre of the world (succeed), so then presumably they will consider English as the most fundamental of the fundamental qualifications when hiring a talent.

Sample 2: Excerpt from a field note (Conversation with a participant, Excerpt 2.1, p. 54)

Original text

상경: 여기 어학연수 오는 학생들의 상당수는 명문대 출신이 아니에요. 물론 여기에 집안의 경제력이 바탕이 되어야하고요. 집안의 경제력이 없으면 어학연수도 하기 힘들어요. 명문대생은 교환학생이라는 프로그램을 이용해서 해외로 오거나 아마 어학연수를 할 필요가 없을 정도로 영어를 잘해야. 명문대 출신이 아닌 학생들은 취업을 위해서
이런 어학연수 경험이 필요해요. 취직할 때 국내파로 비춰지는 것이 싫어서 오기도 하는데 여기에는 경제력이 뒷받침 되어야 해요."

iteral translation

Sangkyung: A large number of students coming here for English study abroad is not from elite universities. Of course, kyŏngjeryŏk of the family should be the foundation. If students do not have kyŏngjeryŏk of the family, it is hard to study English abroad. Students from elite universities go abroad through student exchange programs, or their English is already good to the extent that they do not have to study English abroad. Students from non-elite universities need such experiences of English study abroad for their employment. Some come because they do not want to be viewed as kungnaep’a when seeking a job, but for here, kyŏngjeryŏk must be buttressed.

Edited translation

Sangkyung: A large number of students coming here for English study abroad are not from elite universities. Of course, kyŏngjeryŏk (the financial means) of the family should be the foundation. If the family does not have the financial means, it is hard to go for English study abroad. Also, students from elite universities go abroad through the student exchange programs offered through their universities or do not have to study English abroad because their English is already good. Students from non-elite universities, however, need the experience of English study abroad for employment. Some of them come because they do not want to be viewed as kungnaep’a (students without overseas experience) when seeking a job, but for this, the financial means of students’ families must exist.

Sample 3: Excerpt from an interview (Interview with Geonyoung, Excerpt 2.2., p. 56)

Original text

근영: 일단 너도 나도 다 가니깐. 내가 안가면 불이익이 있지 않을까? 한국인들 다 그렇게하고, 토익 중요하다고 하면 다 가고. 안하면 조금 협잡하잖아. 내가 재보다 못하는 것도 있는데.

Literal translation

Geonyoung: Once you go, I have to go. It would be a disadvantage if I don’t go. Koreans are like this. If TOEIC is important, all go for it. Lack of overseas experiences would make you feel anxious. Even if you think that you have nothing worse than others.
Edited translation

Geonyoung: English study abroad is like, “oh, you’re going, then I’ll go, too.” This is because if I don’t go, I would be disadvantaged in the future when I’m job seeking. You may know how Koreans are. See the case of TOEIC. When the government and corporations said that TOEIC was important, all of the Koreans went to TOEIC prep institutes to study for the TOEIC. If you don’t have global experience, you’d feel anxious. Imagine that you look less attractive because you don’t have global experience even though you don’t think that you’re worse than others in terms of other skills and qualifications.
## Appendix 7

The Number of South Korean Study Abroad Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early SA</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>2,107</td>
<td>3,464</td>
<td>4,052</td>
<td>6,276</td>
<td>8,148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>1,799</td>
<td>3,171</td>
<td>3,301</td>
<td>3,674</td>
<td>5,568</td>
<td>6,670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1,893</td>
<td>2,666</td>
<td>3,367</td>
<td>2,772</td>
<td>4,602</td>
<td>5,582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub Total</td>
<td>4,397</td>
<td>7,944</td>
<td>10,132</td>
<td>10,498</td>
<td>16,446</td>
<td>20,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University SA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>109,151</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>98,331</td>
<td>105,893</td>
<td>100,716</td>
<td>113,735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-degree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>40,782</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>61,572</td>
<td>81,790</td>
<td>91,538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub Total</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>149,933</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>159,903</td>
<td>187,683</td>
<td>192,254</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Year-wise table continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early SA</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>12,341</td>
<td>12,531</td>
<td>8,369</td>
<td>8,794</td>
<td>7,477</td>
<td>6,061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>9,201</td>
<td>8,888</td>
<td>5,723</td>
<td>5,870</td>
<td>5,468</td>
<td>4,977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>6,126</td>
<td>5,930</td>
<td>4,026</td>
<td>4,077</td>
<td>3,570</td>
<td>3,302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub Total</td>
<td>27,668</td>
<td>27,349</td>
<td>18,118</td>
<td>18,741</td>
<td>16,515</td>
<td>14,340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University SA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>123,965</td>
<td>127,000</td>
<td>151,566</td>
<td>152,852</td>
<td>164,169</td>
<td>154,178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-degree</td>
<td>93,994</td>
<td>89,867</td>
<td>89,383</td>
<td>99,035</td>
<td>98,296</td>
<td>85,035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub Total</td>
<td>217,959</td>
<td>216,867</td>
<td>240,949</td>
<td>251,887</td>
<td>262,465</td>
<td>239,213</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Statistics Korea)

* The numbers in this Table should be seen as an estimate. Given that many English study aboard students enter into host countries without a study visa, I expect the actual numbers to be greater.